Middle School

Overview of Academic Program

2022-23 School Year
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Overview of Middle School Program

Our Middle School program is designed to challenge and excite students while supporting their social-emotional development in this critical period of transition. Students will learn to navigate new levels of independence and freedom, changing friend dynamics and increased responsibility. Middle School is a time of rapid personal growth, and students thrive in our caring and supportive environment.

Our core academic programs in English, mathematics, social studies, and science are supplemented with opportunities to dive deep into the arts, world language, and STEM through our electives and explorations courses. Students will expand their ability to think, reason, problem-solve, and communicate while also being given the space to explore and find their creative voice.

Grade Level Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>6th Grade</th>
<th>7th Grade</th>
<th>8th Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>6th Grade English focuses on developing foundational skills necessary for success in middle and high school. Students analyze people, events, and ideas in texts and learn to annotate literature as they read. They work on developing a claim and writing organized paragraphs with textual evidence.</td>
<td>7th Grade English builds on the foundation set in the previous year. Students will explore various literary techniques and poetic devices while developing reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Students explore their imagination and voice through creative writing and continue to build skills in composing effective paragraphs.</td>
<td>8th Grade English prepares students for the materials and rigor of the high school curriculum. Critical thinking, reading strategies, and understanding of literary elements are enhanced through sophisticated core texts. The curriculum is also supplemented with essays, short stories, and poetry throughout the year. Through these works, students explore their own identities and the nature of the society they live in, and they are challenged to examine society from different perspectives.</td>
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| Mathematics | Students in middle school develop a foundation in the core concepts across number sense, algebra, geometry, and statistical thinking. All students entering Pilgrim take an assessment to determine the appropriate course level. Students may take a more advanced course in middle school in consultation with school leadership. Middle School students have taken the following courses in mathematics:  
  - Middle School Math 1 (6th Grade Targets)  
  - Middle School Math 2 (7th Grade Targets)  
  - Middle School Math 3 (8th Grade Targets)  
  - Algebra 1  
  - Geometry  
  - Algebra 2 |
| Social Studies | **Introduction to Social Studies**  
What is Social Studies and how do people in those disciplines contribute to our understanding of how societies work?  
**World History**  
What are the long-term changes and recurring patterns in world history?  
**U.S. History**  
What do we mean when we say “we” in American history? |
| Science | **The Dynamic Earth**  
What are the natural processes of the world and how do they affect the world around us?  
**The Living Earth**  
Why is Earth such a special place, and what impacts do humans have on our surroundings?  
**The Physical Earth**  
Why is matter important and how do interactions between energy and matter impact them both? |
| World Language | Students can take either Spanish or Mandarin. Students enter Middle School beginning at either our introductory course or taking a placement assessment to determine the appropriate level within the target language. |
| Physical Literacy | The Physical Literacy department empowers the vision that everyone is a student-athlete. Through interdisciplinary design and strategy/teamwork, our coaches look to facilitate continuing education in the world of play and athletics. Students choose between the following courses: Sports Skills, Fitness, Yoga and Stretching, and Dance. |
| Electives | The goal of the Middle School Electives program is to provide students with an opportunity to explore a variety of different subjects and topics during their time in Middle School. The courses that students take in Middle School |
lead directly to more extensive programs in High School. The courses offered each year depend on student signups.

Courses may include: Band, Creative Writing, Environmental Science, Debate, Studio Art, Theater Arts, Digital Filmmaking, Photography, Beat Lab, California History, and Engineering Design and Modeling.
English

The focus of English Language Arts is to support students in their development of clear and meaningful communication skills and competencies through reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students learn to think critically by reading and exploring voices and genres that cover a diverse range of global perspectives. This offers students a plethora of opportunities to make connections, develop personal interpretations, foster empathy, and further cultivate an appreciation for reading. Through a variety of personalized writing and speaking activities, our students gain confidence in their ability to express ideas creatively and effectively.

Course Descriptions

6th Grade English

Sixth Grade English includes learning targets in four categories: reading, writing, speaking/listening, and language. We will spend a lot of time analyzing people, events, and ideas in text, and students will learn to annotate the literature that we read. In writing, we will focus on developing a claim and writing organized paragraphs with textual evidence. Writing assignments will include pre-writing, and multiple drafts with peer and teacher feedback.

7th Grade English

In 7th grade English students will start by exploring the reliability of narrators and authors in fictional stories. From here they will take a deep dive into unearthing the impact their past experiences and knowledge have on their understanding of and relationship with a text. We will explore a plethora of literary techniques (in both fiction and non-fiction writing) and poetic devices as we read and discuss the following Anchor Texts: *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman, *Stamped* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi, *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai, and (potentially) *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. Students will also self-select Independent Reading and Literary Circle books. In addition to reading comprehension and fluency, there is a strong focus on developing vocabulary and understanding words through context and the study of Latin roots and affixes. Students will also study rules of grammar and practice developing strong paragraphs through argumentative, expository, and informational writing, culminating in the composition of the five-paragraph essay. Each student will also be supported in exploring their own imagination and voice through creative writing, class discussions and debate, and the composition of poetry and narratives.

8th Grade English

In this course, we will build on the skills developed in English 7 and prepare for the material and rigor of the high school curriculum. Critical thinking, reading comprehension, and understanding of literary elements will be enhanced through study of core texts, such as *The Hate U Give* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. These texts will also be supplemented with a variety of essays, short stories and
poetry. Through these works, we will explore society from varied perspectives and examine the often complex relationship between individual identity and group identity. Students will continue to develop their writing skills through expository, persuasive, and narrative essays, as well as through the study of grammar and vocabulary. With a deeper understanding of literary devices and the elements of a story, students will enhance their own creative writing in exploration of subjects or themes that compel them.

Mathematics

The Mathematics department strives to create critical thinkers who embrace problem solving as a creative process by encouraging students to explore first. Pilgrim mathematicians are able to: activate prior knowledge, appreciate multiple solution pathways, see and make use of structure and patterns, and effectively use technology as an aid to tackle both theoretical and applied rigorous mathematics. Students use their failures and successes to develop their own learning pathway that they find meaningful, interesting, and inspiring. They understand mathematics as a global language and use this to engage in authentic applications across borders and boundaries.

Course Descriptions

Middle School Math 1

Middle School Math 1 is the first course in middle school mathematics, focusing on the 6th grade Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Instruction in this class focuses on four critical areas: (1) connecting ratio and rate to whole number multiplication and division and using concepts of ratio and rate to solve problems; (2) completing understanding of division of fractions and extending the notion of number to the system of rational numbers, which includes negative numbers; (3) writing, interpreting, and using expressions and equations; and (4) developing an understanding of statistical thinking.

Middle School Math 2

Middle School Math 2 is the second course in middle school mathematics, focusing on the 7th grade Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Instruction in this class focuses on four critical areas: (1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships; (2) developing understanding of operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations; (3) solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions, and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume; and (4) drawing inferences about populations based on samples.
Middle School Math 3

Students begin grade 8 with transformational geometry. They study rigid transformations and congruence, then dilations and similarity (this provides background for understanding the slope of a line in the coordinate plane). Next, they build on their understanding of proportional relationships from grade 7 to study linear relationships. They express linear relationships using equations, tables, and graphs, and make connections across these representations. They expand their ability to work with linear equations in one and two variables. Building on their understanding of a solution to an equation in one or two variables, they understand what is meant by a solution to a system of equations in two variables. They learn that linear relationships are an example of a special kind of relationship called a function. They apply their understanding of linear relationships and functions to contexts involving data with variability. They extend the definition of exponents to include all integers, and in the process codify the properties of exponents. They learn about orders of magnitude and scientific notation in order to represent and compute with very large and very small quantities. They encounter irrational numbers for the first time and informally extend the rational number system to the real number system, motivated by their work with the Pythagorean Theorem.

Algebra 1

The fundamental purpose of Algebra 1 is to formalize and extend the mathematics learned in middle school, specifically focusing on the high school Common Core State Standards in Algebra, Number & Quantity, Geometry, Data Analysis, and Math Modeling. Instruction in this class focuses on the following critical areas: deepening and extending understanding of linear and exponential relationships by contrasting them with each other and by applying linear models to data that exhibit a linear trend, and students engage in methods for analyzing, solving, and using quadratic functions.

Geometry

Geometry takes a transformational approach, developing transformations and construction as tools for reasoning and proof that are used in addition to the traditional axiomatic tools of geometry. Congruence and similarity are defined with transformations and students explore symmetry as a way of classifying quadrilaterals. The study of similarity leads to an understanding of right triangle trigonometry and is extended to finding angles and sides for general triangles. The curriculum provides students many opportunities to use their intuitive understanding about geometry and to experiment with compass, protractor, patty paper, rulers, graph paper, dynamic geometry software, and other physical tools to make and justify conjectures.
Social Studies

The Social Studies Department at Pilgrim School facilitates students’ development toward becoming engaged community members at all levels. Through inquiry-based curriculum, research projects, and analysis of primary sources, students form their own responses to thematic questions in social sciences. Students will be presented with multiple perspectives, including traditional narratives alongside historically excluded stories and voices. Students will build an understanding of the relationship between past and present to shape a better future.

Course Descriptions

6th Grade Social Studies

Sixth grade social studies is designed to give students a foundation to build on throughout secondary school classes. They will explore the disciplines of history, geography, economics, government, and civics. Examples will be both ancient and modern and will include societies from different areas of the world. Students will also learn to analyze current events.

7th Grade Social Studies

Students will be able to internalize a thematic understanding of world history, using document-based lessons taken from the book Teaching World History Thematics by Rosalie Metro. Focusing on events from ancient, modern, and current affairs, the course highlights significant individuals from myriad perspectives not often featured in chronological teachings of social studies. Along with forms of government, religion, and economics, the units within the course address highly relevant topics such as tribalism, inequality, progress, and gender. Through a series of activities and projects, as well as assessments both formative and summative, students have the opportunity to engage in higher order thinking that promotes transferable skills.

8th Grade Social Studies

The 8th grade course is a U.S. History survey course examining thematic units between 1460 and present day. Students are encouraged to build on their foundational knowledge of World History to further their global perspective of the past and how it shapes us today. Throughout the school year, students will learn how to be inquisitive historians and analyze multiple perspectives through an introduction to historical analytical writing. Students will further their foundation in history through the study of geography, primary sources and relevant current events.
Science

The Pilgrim School Science Department prepares students to be curious, creative scientists who are knowledgeable in scientific processes, precise in their measurements, thoughtful in their conclusions, and skeptical of scientific claims. Students engage in authentic, self-directed inquiry to develop a global, ethical, and robust understanding of scientific principles and problem solving strategies. Through independent and collaborative work, students find meaning and connection with the world around them.

Course Descriptions

6th Grade Science

Introduction to the processes of Earth while gaining a conceptual understanding of the surrounding world through hands-on experimentation. Throughout the year, we will explore aspects of Chemistry, Physics, Earth and Space Science, Biology, and Ecology so that we can construct a deeper understanding of our “Dynamic Earth”.

7th Grade Science

The goal of this integrated science course is to help students develop a conceptual framework for various aspects of earth and life science, and an appreciation of science as a process. We will be exploring these aspects on a journey through “The Living Earth,” where we will examine why the Earth is such a special place, and what impacts humans have on their surroundings.

8th Grade Science

The goal of this integrated science course is to help students develop a conceptual framework for various aspects of chemistry and physical science, and an appreciation of science as a process. We will be exploring these aspects by examining why matter matters and how interactions between energy and matter impact them both. We will look at what matter and energy are, what forms they take, and how they can change.
World Language

The focus of the World Language Department at Pilgrim is for students to enjoy learning a new language. During class time, clubs, and special events, students are immersed in the target language and culture they study. They see learning languages and studying cultures different from their own as opportunities to expand their knowledge while gaining respect, understanding, and appreciation for people of the world. Students use the language to confidently communicate with others and take pride in their ability to do so. The World Language student is empowered to apply their language skills as leaders in our global society.

Course Descriptions - Spanish

Spanish 1

Spanish 1 is a beginning course that facilitates learning of basic vocabulary (introductions, greetings and leave-takings, numbers, Spanish alphabet, classroom directives, telling time, some body parts, classroom objects, weather, the calendar, seasons, personality traits and physical characteristics, school schedules, prepositions, meals, basic foods for healthy/not healthy US diet, locations in the community and leisure activities, interrogative words, extending, accepting, declining invitations, family, celebrations and parties, and telling age). Emphasis is on the student’s “autobiography”: personality and physical characteristics, personal experience in the classroom, participation in favorite activities, determining healthy lifestyle, and family relations and celebrations.

Spanish 2

This course continues to emphasize the student’s personal experience in the following contexts: describing bedrooms and electronic equipment; identifying rooms in a house, naming household chores, describing where one lives, talking about clothes shopping and prices; talking about buying gifts and different kinds of stores; telling what happened in the past; talking about types of transportation, things to do and places to visit on vacation; talking about past trips; discussing volunteer work and ways to help the environment; describing movies and television programs; expressing opinions about media and entertainment; talking about things you have done recently; talking about computers and the internet. Students will “travel” to Central America, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and other places in the continental Caribbean, as well as Spain and Argentina.

Spanish 3

Spanish 3 explores the thematic units introduced in Levels 1 and 2 more in depth. The emphasis is narration in the past and future, and all of the sophisticated grammar that goes along with it. Cultural objectives for the course include: understanding cultural perspectives on ecological issues, folk art, traveling, foods and outdoor food vendors, recipes and food preparation, movies and TV,
health, holidays and special events, shopping, neighborhoods, clothing, parties, school rules, and extracurricular activities. New grammar concepts introduced in this course include: imperfect aspect of the past tense; use of preterit and imperfect aspects together to narrate in the past; present perfect aspect; future tense; negative informal commands; affirmative and negative formal commands; use of direct and indirect pronouns together; indicative vs. subjunctive moods; present subjunctive to comment on current and future situations. All challenging aspects of pronunciation are reviewed in this course.

Spanish 4

In Spanish 4, students will broaden their knowledge of the Spanish-speaking world while reviewing and extensively using the grammar and vocabulary of previous courses. In addition to engaging in discussion and activities based on student interests (music, art, movies, theater, sports, shopping, etc.) connections will be made to Spanish-speakers by reading short stories, poetry, plays, and selections from novels. Internet, television, movies, and song lyrics also provide a basis for review of grammar and vocabulary as well as cultural connections. Students will write extensively and produce well-structured argumentative and comparative pieces in addition to narrating and describing in the present and the past. Sophisticated grammar topics such as mood will be introduced or expanded upon as needed.

Course Descriptions - Chinese

Chinese 1

In Chinese 1, students learn to interact in a variety of familiar age-appropriate daily and informal settings, using a variety of memorized words and phrases. Our story-based lessons scaffold vocabulary and grammar patterns from prior units to instill confidence in new learning. Students and the teacher work together to foster an environment of exploration, friendship, interaction, collaboration, and mastery. By the end of the course, students will be proficient in introducing themselves and their family in Chinese. They can also discuss time and make plans.

Chinese 2

In Chinese 2, students learn to handle short social interactions in everyday situations by asking and answering simple questions with cultural competency. Our story-based lessons scaffold vocabulary and grammar patterns from prior units to instill confidence in new learning. Students and the teacher work together to foster an environment of exploration, friendship, interaction, collaboration, and mastery. By the end of the course, students will be proficient in communicating about 1) Time; 2) Food; 3) Daily Lives; and 4) Shopping. Beyond the classroom, we encourage learning through the online platform, as well as immerse in the Chinese speaking community.
Chinese 3

In Chinese 3, students continue to develop language skills in targeted settings. Students will build on their prior knowledge, and expand their communicative repertoire. This course includes four units: travel and navigation, academics, fashion, and hobbies and activities.

Chinese 4

In Chinese 4, students learn to participate in conversations on familiar topics using sentences and series of sentences in culturally appropriate ways. Our story-based lessons scaffold vocabulary and grammar patterns from prior units to instill confidence in new learning. Students and the teacher work together to foster an environment of exploration, friendship, interaction, collaboration, and mastery. By the end of the course, students will be proficient in communicating about 1) Relationship & People 情; 2) Business 商; 3) Chinese Ways 礼, and 4) Technology & Modern China 科技. Beyond the classroom, we encourage learning through the online platform and seeking in service of the Chinese-speaking community.
Physical Literacy

Pilgrim Physical Literacy empowers the vision that everyone is a student-athlete. Through interdisciplinary design and use of strategy/teamwork our Physical Literacy staff looks to facilitate a continuing education in the world of play. Our curriculum is centered around the idea that all skills can be learned at the fundamental level and used to create a positive impression of movement throughout the lives of student-athletes. Through the power of play, student-athletes can not only understand the physical world around them, but the idea that social-emotional connections are just as important as running, throwing or catching. Mindfulness, stretching and the simple idea of taking a walk with a friend, are incorporated daily as a reminder that this is paramount to a healthy life path. The theme “your body, your choice” runs deeply in our organic structures of play. A sound understanding of nutrition, stress management and sleep help our student-athletes become effective and sustainable fitness members.

Course Descriptions

Sports Skills

In sports skills, instructors are focused on translating the skills of elementary school into small-sided games. This course is for all things games! Each game will end in a tournament with prizes and a trophy for the champs!

Strength Training and Fitness

Strength Training and Fitness focuses on the basics of Olympic lifting as well as building a foundation for lifelong movement. Instructors focus on the whole athlete and teach the fundamentals of stretching, hip hinge and how to build your own workout at those big box gyms.

Yoga and Stretching

Yoga/Stretching focuses more on the holistic idea of the student-athlete. Mental health, stress-relief strategies and breathing exercises blend with traditional yoga practices. Basic poses and flows will be covered with expert yoga instructors.

Dance

This course is an exploration of dance. Emphasis will be placed on developing a greater awareness of body placement; increasing strength and flexibility: gaining a deeper understanding of music and rhythm in connection to movement: and encouraging an appreciation of dance as an art form through active experience.
Middle School Electives

Students get to choose between a variety of elective options. Elective offerings change from year to year based on student interest.

Course Descriptions

Creative Writing
This class focuses on writing, critiquing and re-writing. We write stories, poems, screenplays, and non-fiction. We critique them, and then each student will revise their piece in response to the comments of peers and to the project rubric. At the end of the semester, you will compile all of your pieces to create a portfolio of your works.

Environmental Science
Driven by student interests, this course investigates the influences that natural systems have on human societies, the influence human societies have on natural systems, and how their long-term functioning is complicated and involves many factors.

Debate
This course is designed to provide you with the knowledge and skills necessary for you to become responsible for your own ideas, to learn to take intellectual risks, to become respectful of the ideas of others, to negotiate differences of perspective and to think critically.

Studio Art
This art class is an exploration of different mediums and practices. Students will be expected to research, write and participate in group critiques. Field trips to local museums and guest artists will help inform a rich and diverse art experience introducing students to the rigor and expectations around the arts programming in the Secondary School.

Theater Arts
If this is your first adventure into theater, fear not! This class is designed to fit all skill levels. From Improvisation to Commedia, you will develop intense imaginations, vocal and physical skills, and the ability to trust your instincts. You will gain a greater sense of self-awareness and self-confidence and further life skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.
Digital Filmmaking

Middle School Film is an introductory level class designed to expose students in 7th and 8th grades to basic concepts and techniques of filmmaking. Students will learn the basic tools for creating such digital media products as public service announcements, commercials, documentaries, music videos, and short films. They will view films and film segments to identify what makes a good story, and will implement their own storyboarding projects as a precursor to creating a script for their projects.

Digital Photography

Digital Photography is a fun, informative, and simple course for everyone that allows them to learn the basics of the Camera Handling Skills, Compositional Techniques and more. By following this course to the end, you will definitely have a much more thorough understanding of Digital Photography and will hopefully be inspired to continue learning photography.

Beat Lab

Learn how to use Ableton Live Software, a software for music creation and performance. It comes with effects, instruments, sounds and all kinds of creative features, basically everything you need to make any kind of music.

Engineering Design and Modeling

In the Design and Modeling course, students discover the design process and develop an understanding of the influence of creativity and innovation in their lives. Students are also challenged and empowered to use and apply what they’ve learned throughout the unit to design a variety of products for children.

California History

This course analyzes the historical factors that have produced the very complex and diverse state of California. We will explore California’s ethnic, economic, and geographical diversity, we will examine the efforts of those Californians who built the political, economic, and social infrastructure of the state and helped shape what people around the world continue to call the "California Dream," and we will learn about the courageous efforts of many Californians to change the reality of their limited and unequal access to that dream. This course will discuss the real history of California. It is complex and filled with stories of both success and failure, power and oppression, interaction and conflict, extraordinary and ordinary individuals, environmental conservation and destruction. Each topic will highlight the lives of Californians and impacts felt across the state and its communities.