



Middle School Curriculum Guide 2021-2022

THE COLORADO SPRINGS SCHOOL

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Purpose

The Middle School Curriculum Guide is intended to provide an overview of the CSS middle school experience, with an emphasis on core academic offerings and signature programs. More detailed information about school policies and procedures, majors dates, and points of contact may be found in the Parent/Student Handbook on the [CSS website](#).

Middle School Philosophy

Like no other developmental stage in a young person's life, the period from age 11 to 14 years is a dynamic time of change and growth. Our Middle School responds to this transition by providing an important bridge between the self-contained, directed environment of elementary school and the self-reliant approach of high school. Students with varied interests, talents, and abilities excel and connect in the CSS Middle School. Students begin to broaden their academic horizon within a safe, supportive, and individually challenging college-preparatory environment. With smaller classes, our students become quickly acquainted and develop lasting friendships. They have the opportunity to evolve as leaders, to volunteer in the community, and to challenge themselves and one another as independent thinkers and problem solvers. Most importantly they learn more about who

they are, figure out their strengths and weaknesses, and discover their passions.

Expectations

Learning the expectations of so many different teachers can be a challenge for new Middle Schoolers. Life is much easier if they practice the Four Rs.

- **R**espect yourself
- **R**espect others
- **R**espect the learning environment
- Take **R**esponsibility for your actions

Any student who keeps the Four Rs in mind will find it easier to negotiate the Middle School world.

Signature Programs

Experiential Education

The Colorado Springs School embraces the concept of learning by doing, both within and beyond the classroom. Our Middle School students travel throughout the Rocky Mountain and Southwest region on curriculum-based seminars designed to reinforce academic skills and teach life lessons through firsthand experience.

All middle school students are expected to attend a 3-day camping trip that serves as the first experiential education trip of the year where students build upon camping and outdoor skills



introduced in Children's School. This experience, known as Seminar I, allows students to collaborate while also acquiring confidence. Seminars II and III take place in the second semester and allow students to more deeply explore an area of interest in a small group setting either in a local setting or across state lines. Middle school experiential education culminates with Walkabout for all 8th graders, a 9-day expedition to the Utah desert. This stimulating experience showcases students' leadership skills, outdoor exploration, deliberate risk taking, group collaboration and independence.

Social & Emotional Learning

At CSS, we celebrate social and emotional learning and growth in our students and find a wide variety of ways to encourage students to think about themselves and their lives beyond academics. Some examples of CSS programs that promote social and emotional learning include:

- Advisory program in all divisions
- The Creative Dramatics program in Children's School
- The 8th-grade Walkabout curriculum (emphasis on group dynamics and reflection)
- Wellness class and initiatives in Upper School
- Service learning projects within the CSS and outer community

Through small classes, seminars, and our Middle School advisory program, the

faculty helps students to develop their social and emotional skills through creating environments where students work in partnership with others toward a mutual goal.

CSS adopted [Yale University's RULER program](#) in 2014 to encourage students' social and emotional learning. Yale research shows that students nationwide who participate in the program experience less stress, better sleep, fewer disciplinary incidents, and perform better in school than those students who do not. Social and emotional learning gives students the skill-sets they need to better:

- understand and manage their emotions.
- set and achieve positive goals.
- feel and show empathy for others.
- make responsible decisions.
- establish and maintain positive relationships.

Student Portfolio

Portfolios are a valuable learning and assessment tool. A Portfolio of student work is a collection of artifacts that illustrate accomplishments and pivotal learning experiences during their journey through CSS. This collection can be made up of text-based, graphics, or multimedia elements archived on our CSS Google Drive. A Portfolio is more than a simple collection; it encourages personal reflection and often involves the exchange of ideas and feedback. In general, Portfolios help students become



critical thinkers and aid in the development of their writing and multimedia communication skills.

Why Portfolios?

- STUDENTS celebrate learning rather than the letter grade they earn in each class.
- STUDENTS practice meta-cognition; thinking about their thinking.
- STUDENTS set authentic learning goals and devise strategies for getting there.
- STUDENTS learn to curate their work and accomplishments, practicing responsibility and organization.
- STUDENTS develop dispositions for life-long learning.
- STUDENTS learn and practice valuable technology skills.
- TEACHERS can individualize the STUDENT learning experience.
- TEACHERS and PARENTS become partners in STUDENTS' learning experience.

Advisory

Every Middle School student has a faculty advisor who monitors their progress, sets goals, establishes a supportive, engaged relationship, and regularly communicates with parents to ensure students stay “on target.” Weekly advisor meetings focus on organization

and study skills, peer relations, self-esteem, and social and emotional growth and well-being.

Homework

We ask students to check homework in their Google Classrooms (via their gmail accounts) or to call a classmate if they are absent or have any questions about a class assignment. They are also encouraged to email the teacher through the directory on Renweb.

Late work not related to an absence may lose a percentage of the total points earned for each day that it is late. If students have an excused absence, it is their responsibility to find out what was covered in class and to complete all assigned classwork and homework within the agreed-upon time.

6TH GRADE COURSES

6th Grade English

English introduces students to a wide range of new skills as they expand upon prior knowledge to help each student develop as a writer, reader and speaker. Students begin the year discussing themes and reviewing literary terms relative to the assigned summer reading books. To connect with the World Geo curriculum, students use literature to visit



settings on different continents: North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. Through daily discussions and frequent journal writing, they explore the themes of personal identity and how they fit into a changing world with different cultures.

Students will read various texts beyond the surface level to predict, analyze, clarify, connect, and evaluate as they focus on understanding characterization, themes and plot. By reading and writing on a regular basis, students will learn about and improve grammar skills as they develop their own voice.

Through a Foundations of Language approach, students will study Greek and Latin prefixes, roots, and suffixes to expand on vocabulary, allowing them to use more intentional diction. Students will begin at the sentence level and progress to multi-paragraph essays by the end of the year. They will write and revise a variety of shorter original pieces ranging from personal narratives to analytical essays to creative mysteries.

Math: Pre-Algebra

Pre-Algebra emphasizes the concepts necessary to ensure success in Algebra. This course covers variables, expressions, integers, fractions, equations, inequalities, perimeter, area, ratio, proportion, and percent. The remainder of the Pre-Algebra concepts will be covered in 7th grade Foundations in Algebra. During this course, students will learn to take daily notes, complete and correct homework, collaborate on challenging problems, and use

technology to further their understanding.

Science: Earth and Space Science

Earth and Space sciences are the primary topics explored in 6th grade science. The course begins with a study of the universe, galaxies, and stars, and concludes with a focus on the earth and its natural systems, where students explore the lithosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere. Students are introduced to literary research and the process of writing a research paper. They practice oral presentation techniques with the support of computerized slides and shoot and edit a video using a green screen and teleprompter. They repeatedly apply the scientific process to experimentation and learn how to write a formal lab report including the formulation of hypotheses, manipulation of independent variables, measurement of dependent variables, creation of effective data tables and graphs, and analysis of results.

The year culminates with students designing and conducting independent research. As part of the 6th grade science program, students will learn the fundamentals of computer programming in Python, including variable-value identification, computer outputs, variable type, user input, mathematical calculations, and conditional statements.

History: World Geography

The World Geography curriculum is designed to provide students with an



overview of the world, its continents, countries, cultures, and political systems. The curriculum expands upon the students' skills in map reading, research, understanding of cultural diffusion, and knowledge of world history. Emphasis is placed upon the themes of geography: place, location, region, human/environment interaction, and movement. A variety of hands-on activities are incorporated, and students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in long-term assignments, such as map creation and country projects. This course helps students master the skills necessary to succeed in future classes in history at both the Middle School and Upper School levels.

World Language: Spanish

This course is the first level of formal Spanish language study offered in the Middle School. Students will learn the fundamentals of the Spanish language as they explore the history and culture of the Spanish-speaking parts of the world. While speaking is heavily emphasized, students will also practice their listening, reading, and writing skills in Spanish. Students will practice grammatical and structural patterns and verb conjugations through storytelling, activities, games, and music.

World Language: French I

This course fosters fluency in listening and speaking. The curriculum also reinforces basic structural patterns in the

language and develops writing and reading skills. In addition, students become familiar with Francophone culture around the world. Students will be expected to use as much French as possible in class discussions and activities. Participation will be maximized through the use of skits, dialogues, presentations, and other meaningful and engaging activities. Students will also foster a desire to learn about and interact with other cultures and develop a basic knowledge of the geography and history of the Francophone world.

6th Grade Arts Foundations

This exciting year-long course is tailored to rising 6th grade students, exposing them to the three disciplines of: Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts in a way that will allow them to establish a firm foothold as they enter the Middle School Arts program. Students build off of the already familiar arts curriculum established in the Children's School, while broadening their knowledge and taking new risks as they explore at a developmentally appropriate pace.

Music

The section of 6th Grade Arts Foundations dedicated to music is an approach that gives our students an edge in advancing their knowledge and understanding of music. Playing an instrument engages both sides of the brain. It works fine motor skills, helps to



refine listening skills and enhances your memory. To achieve this, all 6th grade students will continue to participate in our band program. Students will also have the opportunity to develop basic vocal skills, as the voice is everybody's first instrument. They will use their voice to train their ears, which helps build musicianship with any instrument. Both instrumental and vocal development help to bolster confidence and foster creativity.

Middle School Band is not considered a "beginning band" experience; however, students that are new to our school, or new to an instrument can successfully integrate themselves into our band. Students that find themselves in this situation will receive support from the band director, their MS Band peers, and US Band mentors. 6th Grade students will participate in both the Winter and Spring Concerts as well as the school's Graduation Ceremony. If you have questions or concerns, please consult with Mr. Mo.

Theatre

In the Theatre Arts foundation class, students continue developing their actor tool box and working as an ensemble, skills they established in Children's School. Additionally, students further develop their theatrical terminology and

vocabulary, dive deeper into characterization and scene study, explore theatre criticism and the relationship between theatre arts and life. The class will culminate in a final performance piece. This course prepares them for the Theatre at Play class, where students participate in a full-length production. We will have a sharing of the work we've accomplished.

Visual Arts

In the Visual Arts foundation class, students explore both two and three dimensional projects. A wide variety of media is incorporated as students focus on the elements and principles of art and design. An overview of skills in drawing, composition, color theory and three dimensional materials are practiced. Art units are designed to creatively engage students and provide a broad overview, preparing students with skills and techniques necessary for future Visual Arts classes.

The Middle School Arts Program also hosts the Artist in Residence each year. This time-honored program allows Middle School students the opportunity to expand their artistic horizons. Visiting artists from the community are invited to teach courses on unique topics over a three-week period, exposing students to new mediums and highly skilled arts



professionals. It is an opportunity to draw from a community of experts and professionals for a period of short-term but intensive study from a wide range of disciplines, that dive deep into theatre, music, dance, sculpture, painting and much more.

7TH GRADE COURSES

7th Grade English

Literature and Composition uses literature of varying genres, including short stories, fiction, and non-fiction, as a catalyst to introduce and cultivate productive discussion skills and sound writing skills. Students participate in interactive discussions as well as individual and group presentations to their peers. Writing exercises cover narrative, descriptive, expository and analytical formats and focus on each stage of the writing process from prewriting to editing.

This course also emphasizes vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and grammar. Vocabulary and spelling are studied in conjunction with literature. Students continue to apply their recognition of common grammatical errors in addition to learning the technical workings of the language. Knowledge of the parts of speech and their correct usage, varying

sentence types, sentence structure, phrases, and modifiers are emphasized through oral, written and creative exercises.

Math: Foundations in Algebra

Foundations in Algebra continues where 6th grade left off in the study of Pre-Algebra. It continues to reinforce the use of variables in order to solve problems. The students study how to apply algebra to geometry and how algebra extends to statistics and probability. For success in this course, students need a firm foundation in number manipulation using addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, positive and negative numbers, fractions, decimals, and percent. Current technology and application projects allow the students to focus on problem-solving skills and strategies. Students demonstrate mastery of this year's concepts by explaining mathematics through reading, writing, working with others, as well as competency on quizzes and tests.

Science: Life Science

Exploration of the earth's living systems is the content focus of the 7th grade science curriculum. Beginning with ecosystems and biomes, students explore the concept of scale and levels of organization within the biosphere. Experimentation skills developed in 6th grade are applied and further developed in examinations of ecosystems, populations, organic chemistry, cell



biology, genetics, comparative biology, and human biology. Students routinely design, conduct, and analyze data from their own experiments, increasingly incorporating the use of spreadsheets for data analysis and graphing over the course of the year.

Teamwork, work efficiency, and quality of lab technique are common threads throughout the year. Experimental results from independent research are frequently presented to classmates. As part of the 7th grade science program, students will build on the Python programming skills they developed in 6th grade, to include while loops, for loops, random number generators, and functions. The computer science unit culminates in the creation of a text-based game or choose-your-own-adventure story.

History: American History

American history explores the major historical events that gave birth to and shaped our nation from the Pre-Columbian Era through World War 2. Connections to relevant topics from recent decades are made as often as possible to create personal meaning of the events of the past. Students regularly engage in Harkness discussions to build conversational skills, while historical document and political cartoon analysis develops students' critical-thinking abilities. Students work on long-term projects which enhance their research and writing skills. Through this course, students become better researchers,

decision makers, planners, designers, and communicators.

World Language: Spanish

Spanish in 7th grade is a course that fosters fluency in listening and speaking, reinforces basic structural patterns in the language, and develops writing and reading skills. Students study basic grammar and structural patterns. In addition, students learn to conjugate regular and irregular verbs in the present and preterite.

Through units that study the present reality, history, and culture of today's Spanish speaking countries, students will acquire a wide range of at least 500 vocabulary words and reinforce the Spanish lexicon they acquired in sixth grade Spanish. Spanish must be used as frequently as possible in all class discussions and activities to further the level of language acquisition.

World Language: Spanish I

This course is intended for students who lack a foundation in Spanish and combines topics from the 6th and 7th grade Spanish classes into a single year. Students will study basic grammar and structural patterns. In addition, students will learn to conjugate regular and irregular verbs in the present and preterite. By the end of the school year, students will be prepared for 8th grade Spanish.



Students will learn to generate spontaneous speech (i.e., tell stories, give non-memorized presentations, and respond - all in Spanish) as well as speak fluently in present and past tense so that a native speaker can understand.

World Language: French I

This course fosters fluency in listening and speaking. The curriculum also reinforces basic structural patterns in the language and develops writing and reading skills. In addition, students become familiar with Francophone culture around the world. Students will be expected to use as much French as possible in class discussions and activities. Participation will be maximized through the use of skits, dialogues, presentations, and other meaningful and engaging activities. Students will also foster a desire to learn about and interact with other cultures and develop a basic knowledge of the geography and history of the Francophone world.

Band

Band is a year-long course of study that places emphasis on developing the students' knowledge, skill, and artistic sensitivity when performing instrumental music. The focus of study is on a wide range of music literature and styles. Students will also gain greater control of technique, articulations, rhythms, dynamics, time signatures, intonation, balance and blend, expression, develop

leadership skills and learn the importance of teamwork. Students will participate in concerts given throughout the year (including CSS Winter and Spring Concerts, the school's Graduation Ceremony, and the possibility of other public performances).

Theatre

The Middle School Theatre courses of study include Theatre Arts and Theatre at Play. These courses are built upon the belief that every student has an important part in a community where drama is created.

Each course is designed to provide the students with a chance to get involved in the craft at a very personal level. During the Middle School years, the course work embraces a more informed critical approach to the study of theatre. Either through the development of a show in the Theatre at Play class or through the more broad studies in the Theatre Arts class, students learn and develop important skills through their active participation in the work of the theatre. Throughout the year, this work offers a variety of approaches with an emphasis placed on creativity, communication, collaboration, and stretching of boundaries and imaginations. Every student has the opportunity to become immersed in their own creative instincts, to build self-confidence in their personal creative abilities, and to grow as a human being.



Visual Arts

Middle School Art is a rigorous survey of art technique and history that is directly linked to a hands-on studio art production. A wide variety of mediums are explored as students make real connections to specific artists and art movements. Students develop foundations in concept, design and communication while they solidify skills in drawing, composition, color theory and 3D materials. This course prepares students to engage in a wide variety of art mediums with established skills and an ability to apply art concepts as they successfully express their own ideas.

The Middle School Arts Program also hosts the Artist in Residence each year. This time-honored program allows Middle School students the opportunity to expand their artistic horizons. Visiting artists from the community are invited to teach courses on unique topics over a three-week period, exposing students to new mediums and highly skilled arts professionals. It is an opportunity to draw from a community of experts and professionals for a period of short-term but intensive study from a wide range of disciplines, that dive deep into theatre, music, dance, sculpture, painting and much more.

8TH GRADE COURSES

8th Grade English

Students explore different genres to focus on themes relating to decision-making, leadership, and transitioning to adulthood. They begin the year discussing the summer reading books before exploring short stories, non-fiction writing, opinion essays, a novella, mythology, a play, poetry, and an allegory. Building upon all that they have learned in Middle School, students add to a cumulative portfolio of their writing, ranging from analytical essays to creative stories to researched persuasive letters. An extensive research project reinforces MLA standards and allows students to pursue a topic of personal interest.

Building upon the Foundations of Language program, students continue to learn about the influence of Greek and Latin on the English language to increase vocabulary and strengthen diction. On a daily basis they read, write and discuss various topics to develop opinions (thesis statements) supported with specific examples and commentary. Students culminate the year by extensively revising a selected piece of writing to potentially share with a live audience.



Math: Algebra I

Algebra I builds on concepts that were learned in Foundations in Algebra. Topics covered are linear equations, linear functions, relations, systems of equations, polynomials, and quadratic equations. To enhance learning, students will deepen their understanding of concepts by using graphing calculators. At times we will use the “flipped classroom” approach, and class time will be used to delve into challenging real world applications. Daily work will be differentiated to fit the level of the students. This course will give students the algebra foundation needed for Geometry and Algebra II.

Science: Physical Science

Physics and chemistry are the content focus areas of the 8th grade science curriculum. Chemistry topics include a review of atomic structure, which we build on to include electron configurations, atoms versus ions, and trends in the periodic table of elements. Extrinsic versus intrinsic properties and physical versus chemical properties lead to investigations of states of matter, changes of state, specific heat, and density. The unit culminates with basic chemical reactions and balancing chemical equations.

On the heels of chemistry, come an exploration of electricity and magnetism, with a focus on electric generators and motors, electromagnetism, static electricity, and electric current and

circuits. Students end the year with forces and motion wherein they make many connections with the 8th grade math curriculum and learn to explain observable physical phenomena with both graphs and equations. This year is filled with experimentation and engineering, both of which entail student-generated scientific questions and the iterative process of engineering. As part of the 8th grade science program, students will build on the computer programming skills they developed in 6th and 7th grade when applying their skills to the world of robotics.

History: Ancient Civilizations

Ancient Civilizations is a survey course in which students will carefully examine the cultures of the ancient world in order to understand and compare the elements which constitute each society. They will learn how and why these civilizations came to exist, develop, and endure. The course will cover the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia, India, and China, as well as the Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. A main component of the course will be the development of historical research methods and writing skills through a thesis project. Students will build critical-thinking and conversational abilities through regular Harkness discussions. Students will have the opportunity to develop their own civilization in an extensive multimodal project, which will require the students to think creatively about the civilizations of the past, while at the same time letting



their creativity and imaginations take them places they never dreamed.

World Language: Spanish I

This course is intended for students who lack a foundation in Spanish and combines topics from the 6th and 7th grade Spanish classes into a single year. Students will study basic grammar and structural patterns. In addition, students will learn to conjugate regular and irregular verbs in the present and preterite. By the end of the school year, students will be prepared for Spanish II at the Upper School level.

Through units that study the present reality, history, and culture of today's Spanish speaking countries, students will acquire a wide range of at least 500 vocabulary words. Spanish must be used as frequently as possible in all class discussions and activities to further the level of language acquisition.

World Language: Spanish II

In 8th grade, students progress to the next level in the Auténtico textbook series. Students revisit basic grammatical and structural patterns, conjugate regular and irregular verbs in the present indicative and the past preterite, and learn how to express themselves in the past imperfect conjugation. By the end of the school year, students should be prepared for Spanish III at the Upper School level.

The units from the part of the book students will be covering include *The School Day*, *Special Events*, *You and Your Community*, and *Memories from the Past*. The context in which the students will express themselves will go beyond these themes, as students continue to study the present reality, history, and culture of today's Spanish speaking countries. Spanish must be used as frequently as possible in all class discussions and activities to further the level of language acquisition.

Band

Middle School Band is a year-long course of study that places emphasis on developing the student's knowledge, skill, and artistic sensitivity when performing instrumental music. MS Band is not considered a beginning band experience; however, students that are new to an instrument and have a serious desire to participate in this type of ensemble, can successfully integrate themselves into our band. Interested students that find themselves in this situation will receive support from the band director, their MS Band peers, US Band mentors, and possibly through private lesson instruction. The focus of our study encompasses a wide range of music literature and styles. Students will gain greater control of techniques on their instruments, develop leadership skills, and learn the importance of teamwork as they create something larger than they could ever do on their own. Students will participate in concerts given throughout the year (including CSS



Winter and Spring Concerts, the school's Graduation Ceremony, and the possibility of other public performances).

Theatre

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