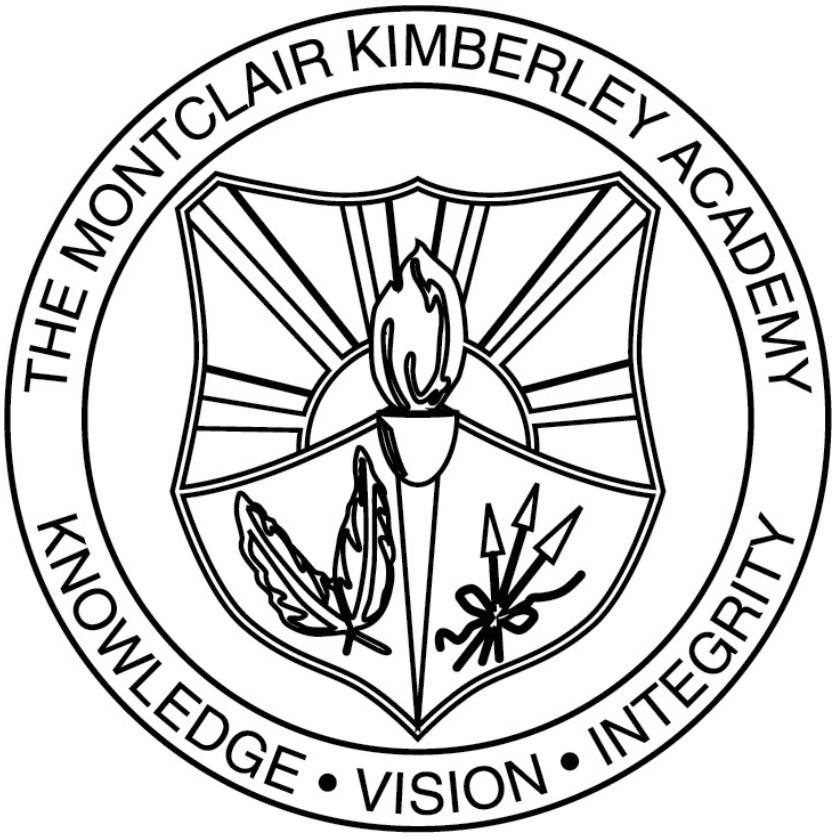
ACADEMIC PROGRAM GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL



MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY

2026–2027

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MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY MISSION STATEMENT

MKA's challenging, engaging, and innovative academic program provides a vibrant and transformative education. Our faculty's deep and genuine understanding of our students as individuals and as learners fosters their ethical development, intellectual growth, and personal success. MKA's diverse, collaborative, and inclusive community inspires students to lead lives of noble character, purpose, and distinction.

Evidence of our mission is found in the Knowledge, Vision, and Integrity of our students and our alumni:

KNOWLEDGE:
Academic excellence
Intellectual independence
Love of learning

VISION:
Personal engagement with the world
Understanding of human complexity
A sense of humility and compassion

INTEGRITY:
Strength of character
Responsibility as a citizen and leader
An honorable and generous life

MKA LEARNERS ARE:

ETHICAL LEADERS AND CHANGE AGENTS

who, through socially conscious reflection and action, develop the character and habits to inspire positive change.

REFLECTIVE HUMANS

who notice, wonder, and explore both to develop and to adjust their understanding.

SKILLFUL COMMUNICATORS AND COLLABORATORS

who develop unique voices as they communicate original ideas with insight, purpose, and compassion. They value both their own and others' perspectives, expertise, and contributions.

LIFELONG LEARNERS

who are driven by insatiable curiosity, a willingness to explore new ideas and viewpoints, and a commitment to creativity and innovation that continually evolves.

CHARACTER STANDARDS FOR THE MKA COMMUNITY

All members of the MKA community strive to act, speak, and think in ways that are:

Respectful

We act with civility in our relations with others while still valuing ourselves. We are conscious of the world around us, and we recognize the worth of all we have and treat it accordingly.

Friendly

We demonstrate good will and compassion in our relationships with others. We understand that in order to have friends we must be friends and treat all with understanding, loyalty, and respect.

Responsible

We fulfill obligations and complete tasks to the fullest of our ability, and we are accountable members of our community. We volunteer our assistance when called upon and budget our time, efforts, and resources sensibly.

Confident

We uphold a positive image of ourselves regardless of the way others perceive us. We recognize our potential and challenge ourselves to improve the talents and skills we possess. We are able to take pride in our work, while remaining humble and accepting criticism. We express our opinions freely without fear of the judgment of others and always speak up when we see acts of injustice.

Temperate

We balance all aspects of our lives. By devoting personal attention to academics and personal commitments, we maintain moderation. While welcoming relaxation, we exert self-control and strength of will when faced with temptation and challenge.

Fair

We cultivate an environment where all students may act and speak without the fear of prejudice, intolerance, or judgment. We recognize and seek to understand the differences between individuals in the community. While recognizing these differences, we also value the inherent equality among all.

Informed

We rely not only on our own experiences to make decisions, but we also actively seek a more thorough understanding of the world. With our knowledge, we envision a more peaceful and empathetic society.

Honest

We understand the value and necessity of being true to ourselves, as well as others, and we are sincere in words and actions. We take pride in the authenticity of our own work and ideas, and we have the courage and integrity to take responsibility for all of our actions.

INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE CURRICULUM

MKA is committed to providing a meaningful experience for lifelong learning, so students can become impactful members of an inclusive, global community.

Creating an inclusive and representative curriculum is more than just changing curriculum and content; it's a mindset, an active and ongoing process, and a curricular practice that teachers engage in. It begins with all teachers identifying their own biases and then designing units of study that honor and are relevant to the students they are currently teaching. It includes discussing real-world issues, designing assessments grounded in student voice and choice, and providing opportunities for students to learn from one another.

All students should see themselves represented within the curriculum. The course resources (e.g., images, books, primary sources, and films) that teachers use for instruction reflect the diversity of the student body. We expose students to a broad range of voices when exploring issues such as racism, classism, and discrimination.

As part of an inclusive and representative curricular practice, teachers are committed to:

- Honoring their students' narratives.
- Providing multiple perspectives within their disciplines.
- Providing all students with opportunities to understand themselves and other members of both the MKA community and the global society.
- Ensuring that MKA is a safe environment in which to explore and discuss multiple perspectives, ask challenging questions, and create positive social change.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies for the MKA Community

Taking Care of *Myself*

Self-Awareness

I KNOW how I feel and can communicate it clearly.

I know my strengths and challenges.

I know when to seek help and how to find it.

I know there are many parts of myself that make me who I am.

I identify and understand how my emotions, values, strengths, challenges, and personal and social identities*—and their interconnections—develop an accurate self perception.

I examine my own prejudices and biases.

I embrace a growth mindset.

I develop my sense of purpose.

Self-Management

I MANAGE my emotions, stress, and actions.

I make good choices and act with integrity.

I set and achieve goals.

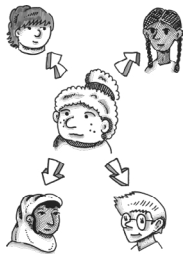
I organize and motivate myself.

I control impulses that cause harm, and I exercise self-discipline.

I work with my community to set and achieve collective goals.

And *Others*

Social Awareness



I RESPECT other people's feelings and perspectives.

I empathize with other people and demonstrate compassion.

I strive to be a positive influence in my school and community.

I read social cues in a variety of contexts.

I acknowledge, value, and honor everyone's perspectives, cultures, and humanity.

I understand the influences of organizations and systems on an individual's experience.

I stand up against actions and structures that cause harm.

Relationship Skills

I BUILD positive and healthy relationships.

I listen actively, communicate clearly, and collaborate effectively.

I respect and strive to understand the uniqueness of all individuals.

I help to resolve conflicts that cause harm.

I provide positive leadership in groups.

I interact with individuals in ways that demonstrate understanding of and honor their multiple identities*.

I negotiate disagreements constructively.

I seek and offer help (when needed).

I resist negative peer pressure.

And my *Community*

Responsible Decision-Making

I MAKE safe, responsible, respectful, and constructive choices.

I work to understand and solve personal and community problems with an open mind.

I stand up for the rights of others.

I analyze situations and information.

I take personal, social, and ethical responsibility.

I reflect on my role in promoting personal and collective well-being and evaluate the impact of my actions.

*The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) identifies 17 sample cultural identifiers, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, and ability.

Artwork by Katie Chung '24

MKA | Montclair Kimberley Academy

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies for the MKA Community

Social and Emotional Learning at MKA helps students to build an essential foundation for academic and personal success by developing the self-awareness, empathy, and good character needed to make responsible decisions and create positive relationships with others. All members of the MKA community commit to developing the skills identified here and modeling them for others.

Self-Awareness

The ability to identify and understand your emotions, thoughts, and multiple identities* (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, ability) and how they influence behavior in different situations—and how different situations influence your behavior. The ability to understand your values, strengths, challenges, and areas for growth with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.

Self-Management

The ability to regulate your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes developing the capacities to manage stress, create balance, delay gratification, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal/collective goals.

Social Awareness

The ability to understand multiple perspectives and to act with empathy and compassion for one another. This includes understanding how your words and actions—and historical and current social structures—impact you and others.

Relationship Skills

The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive friendships and other relationships and to effectively navigate situations with diverse individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly, listen actively, work collaboratively, negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek and/or offer help when needed.

Responsible Decision-Making

The abilities to make caring, respectful, and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions in different situations and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards (such as honesty and fairness), cultural norms, and safety, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.

*The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) identifies 17 sample cultural identifiers.

MKA acknowledges the following as inspiration for its development of this SEL Competencies document:

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). We used their five SEL core competencies and adapted their definitions and skills.
- Anchorage, AK School District's *K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards and Indicators* (as viewed in 2017)
- Illinois State Board of Education's *Illinois Learning Standards: Social/Emotional Learning* (as viewed in 2017)
- Responsive Classroom

MKA also thanks Lauren Hyman Kaplan, M.A. for her insights and guidance. | Artwork by Katie Chung '24.

MKA | Montclair Kimberley Academy

MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMICS

Middle School students in both the Lower and Upper Houses engage in varied learning experiences that help them to develop curiosity, the ability to problem-solve, and a love of learning. Students in the fourth and fifth grades comprise the Lower House of the Middle School; students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades comprise the Upper House.

Faculty intentionally craft curricula to promote students' growth and to ensure that all students learn to be skillful communicators and collaborators who are reflective about both their learning and their ability to effect change in their communities. Guided by community norms that reflect MKA's Mission Statement and Character Standards, the MKA Learner, our Inclusive and Representative Curriculum, and the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies for the MKA Community, students practice both academic and social and emotional skills as they develop their voices and become increasingly independent learners.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

DAILY SCHEDULE

The fourth-grade class structure follows the Primary School model where students learn reading, writing, social studies, and math with their advisor and travel to their other classes primarily with their homeroom group. Fifth grade begins the transition to the departmentalized structure of the Upper House where students switch classes based on disciplines, but they travel to see the subject-area specialists with their homeroom group. Lower House students' activity is primarily centered in one, "home" hallway, dedicated to fourth- and fifth-grade students, where the majority of their classes meet.

In the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, students are assigned an advisor group and travel throughout the school on individualized schedules. English, social studies/history, math, science, and world language classes meet six times per eight-day cycle. Fine and performing arts and health, wellness, and physical education classes meet five times per eight-day cycle. To see a visual representation of students' daily schedule, please see pages 44 and 45.

MORNING ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT PERIOD

During this daily period, students are assigned a study hall location either with their advisor group or with their grade level. Students can engage in opportunities such as subject-specific support; quiet study; group study; ensemble rehearsals; and meetings with teachers, advisors, and academic support team members. The time allows for structured choice to best support learning.

ADVISOR PROGRAM

The advisor program focuses on the development of the social and emotional learning (SEL) of our students. It allows students to build an essential foundation for academic and personal success by developing the self-awareness, empathy, and good character needed to make responsible decisions and create positive relationships with others. Advisor groups meet at the beginning of each day and offer a check-in at the end of the day as well. They also meet once a week for advisor lessons and activities that address SEL goals anchored by MKA's Social and Emotional Learning Competencies (see pages 8 and 9).

The advisor is the primary contact between the school and a student's family. Whenever possible, students' homeroom advisors teach their advisees in at least one subject and get to know them in small, advisor-group settings. Advisors attend to their advisees' academic, social, and behavioral development; advocate for their advisees; and provide a comfortable forum in which to discuss a multitude of topics in age-appropriate ways.

FLEX OFFERINGS

The purpose of FLEX period is to allow students the opportunity to explore areas of interest and to exercise some independence to shape their individual learning. FLEX takes place up to four times a cycle, depending on the grade level; and FLEX classes last for one semester. Some examples of faculty-led FLEX offerings include Geography, Pick-Up Basketball, Open Art, Chess, Current Events, and Book Club. Students in sixth through eighth grade may participate in yearlong Fine and Performing Arts FLEXES, such as Jazz Band and Chamber Singers. Yearlong Affinity Groups are also scheduled during FLEX periods. In addition, students may use this period to seek academic enrichment and/or support by attending sessions such as math, writing, world language, science lab, or a study hall to complete assignments independently.

LEADERSHIP CLUBS

Leadership Clubs meet once each week for students in the Upper House. This dedicated time encourages students to explore areas of leadership that match their interests while developing the skills and habits of Ethical Leadership within the Middle School community. Some clubs are designed specifically for Middle School students, while others align with Upper School Leadership Clubs, creating meaningful opportunities for collaboration and connection between the two campuses.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning (SEL) and wellness at MKA help students establish an essential foundation for personal and academic success. A comprehensive wellness approach supports the whole student in developing self-awareness, empathy, and good character. Research shows that students who attend schools with strong SEL programs have higher academic achievement, better mental health, and fewer behavioral difficulties in school—benefits that continue into adulthood. Students learn to build positive relationships with others and make responsible decisions. See pages 8 and 9 for more information.

COMMUNITY BELONGING

Middle School students continue the Community Belonging work that they began at the Primary School to examine their own identities and share what makes them unique and special within our community, so all students feel seen, heard, understood, safe, and honored for who they are. As students grow and demonstrate developmental readiness, they explore and appreciate differences and similarities, challenge stereotypes, and acknowledge the range of perspectives within and outside our community. In keeping with MKA's Mission Statement (see page 4), to recognize complexity and value empathy, students and adults welcome, embrace, support, and encourage members of the MKA community: its identities, experiences, and aspirations. In forming and affirming positive classroom communities, students celebrate and value their individual differences.

Our inclusive and representative curriculum is taught in conjunction with social and emotional learning skills, which instill respect for the individual as well as all members of our community. Students are encouraged to speak confidently and genuinely, inspiring everyone to examine life and history from a variety of perspectives. See the description of MKA's Inclusive and Representative Curriculum on page 7.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

We believe that all students are on a personal leadership journey to serve as leaders and create positive change in their worlds. Both Ethics and leadership development are integrated into all areas of school life—from the classroom to the playing field. Our Mission Statement and Character Standards (see pages 4 and 6) serve as the foundation for both explicit and implicit education in character and leadership. More specifically, students from Jr-K through twelfth grade actively engage with the following questions in developmentally appropriate ways across all three campuses: "Who am I, and who am I hoping to become? What does it mean to be a member of a community? How am I contributing? How am I serving as a leader?" With the understanding that Ethics is the essential entry point for authentic leadership work, our goal is to provide all of our students with the opportunity to examine their individual identity and character development and then chart their own Ethical Leadership path, rooted in integrity, empathy, and service.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through hands-on, real-world experiences, MKA students cultivate empathy, develop a deeper understanding of social responsibility, and recognize their power to effect positive change. Whether they are volunteering locally, leading school-wide initiatives, or partnering with organizations beyond MKA's walls, students are encouraged to listen, act, and reflect. Through authentic learning experiences, students develop lifelong, social-emotional habits and learn to partner with others to make a difference within a community as Ethical Leaders.

Students Learn To:

- Use dialogue to establish relationships with community partners that provide insight into the partners' perspectives and needs.
- Act on the understanding of their responsibility as citizens to positively impact a community.
- Reflect to foster personal growth and refine their strategy for impact.

At The Middle School

Community engagement is a significant part of the lives and education of all Middle School students. Through the advisory program, students develop their awareness of the world and the role they can play in fostering positive change through service. Each grade level also participates in a project, which involves sharing gifts and talents with the community and selecting causes to support.

In addition to their service by grade level, Middle School students participate in school-wide community engagement projects, such as the Thanksgiving food drive and the student-faculty basketball game, along with optional service clubs, which reinforce students' growing understanding of their ability to lead and serve.

LIBRARY: EXPLORATION, RESEARCH, AND RESOURCES

In the recently renovated Middle School Library, students have space and resources to collaborate and thrive in a rapidly changing world. The library program supports students' reading and information literacy development through library class in fourth and fifth grades and integrated, interdisciplinary research projects in fourth through eighth grades.

Students explore a wide variety of literature through independent choice, read-alouds, readers' theatre, and book talks, which play a unique and complementary role in students' literacy development. These experiences support the classroom reading curriculum and help students develop their reading identities. Students can explore a robust library collection that supports their interests by providing a global glimpse of people and cultures and access to different text formats. The combined use of Destiny (mka.follettdestiny.com), the online collection management system; subscription research databases; and the Sora collection of digital eBooks, audiobooks, and magazines, expands access to the library's physical and online collections.

Librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to instill in students a passion for reading and to provide an integrated and interdisciplinary information literacy curriculum. Guided by the MKA Research Cycle, a framework for honing information-literacy skills, students develop a toolkit of skills to aid strategic research through wondering; questioning; searching and observing; analyzing and recording; organizing and synthesizing; and sharing.

STEM+ MINDSET

Preparing the MKA Learner to learn and lead in a rapidly changing world includes a significant focus on developing a STEM+ mindset. Guided by our commitment to Ethical Leadership, MKA invites students not only to make connections among the traditional areas of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) but also to explore the limitless potential when STEM skills and concepts are combined with other interdisciplinary skills to create new ideas and solve real-world problems.

At The Middle School

Students in fourth through eighth grade are immersed in opportunities to develop their STEM+ mindset through the robust math sequence and lab-based science classes at each grade level. The fourth- and fifth-grade Tech Bytes program prepares students to be responsible digital citizens as they learn operational and computational skills on their MacBooks. Coding and robotics are integrated into fourth- and fifth-grade science, and all science courses use engineering and design to apply and extend scientific thinking.

The FLEX program offers all students opportunities to explore computer science, robotics, and design and fabrication. An annual STEM+ Week challenges students to collaborate as they apply their STEM+ thinking to a campus-wide design sprint.

The new Fabrication and Robotics Lab (official name to be determined by the students) is a community hub where students can use recess or CWP time to tinker with building materials, 3D modeling, additive and subtractive fabrication, and robotics. The Lab also serves as an interdisciplinary learning space for classes to visit as they integrate STEM+ thinking into their curricula. The Middle School robotics team offers an additional, competitive outlet for students who are curious about or experienced with robotics and programming to develop a well-researched innovation project that identifies a problem and develops a solution.

TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING

Educational technology use at MKA enriches learning, nurtures creativity, and prepares students to thrive in a connected world. Teaching and learning with technology, tailored to students' developmental stages and learning needs, empowers students to leverage digital tools to enhance inquiry, communication and collaboration, productivity, and innovation.

Rooted in its commitment to thoughtful and transformative learning, MKA helps students become flexible thinkers and ethical leaders who use educational technology tools and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, safely and responsibly, with intentionality and integrity. The faculty guide students in developing digital literacy, citizenship, and personal agency. As students build healthy digital habits, their mindful use of technology centers well-being.

Whether helping students amplify, demonstrate, or share their learning, technology enables students to grow as engaged, reflective, lifelong learners—prepared to lead lives of noble character, purpose, and distinction in a world with an ever-evolving technological landscape.

At The Middle School

Across the curriculum, Middle School teachers integrate technology as a learning tool to empower students to actively make meaning from their learning, construct knowledge, and creatively express themselves using various platforms appropriate to their learning goals. MKA's commitment to preparing students for academic excellence and the development of good character includes its 1:1 Laptop Learning Initiative that provides each Middle and Upper School student with a laptop. Laptops are equipped with an identical suite of software to ensure a common platform for instruction and are replaced on a three-year cycle. Fourth- and fifth-grade students receive direct instruction to learn the fundamentals of responsible computer use, digital citizenship, communication, literacy, and security to become responsible and productive users of digital technology.

Teachers in sixth through twelfth grade use Veracross as a learning management system to organize their course resources for student access, providing continuity from one class meeting to the next. A variety of vetted and approved synchronous and asynchronous technology tools provide powerful communication and collaboration opportunities, allowing teachers and students to share ideas, give and respond to feedback, and build knowledge together.

CLASS TRIPS

During the first months of school, each grade level takes a class trip that encourages collaboration, team-building, and students' learning about one another and themselves. Students in fourth and fifth grade have the opportunity to build and strengthen relationships during a day trip to Camp Mason. Activities are designed to encourage bonding and trust among each advisor group. Students in sixth and seventh grade travel to Fairview Lake YMCA Camp. The sixth grade travels for the day, and the seventh grade spends one night. Students in eighth grade extend their studies of Colonial America with a four-day, research-based trip that immerses them in the colonial life of Williamsburg, VA.

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

MKA's Global Experience offers Middle School students invaluable and enriching experiences that enhance their studies. Seventh- and eighth-grade students of French and eighth-grade students of Spanish may travel to France or Spain on an immersion trip linked to their world language studies. Students participate in educational excursions to important historical and cultural sites. An additional trip to Costa Rica focuses on collaborative leadership, biodiversity, and sustainability and is offered to all interested students in eighth grade.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

HOMEWORK

Homework contributes to effective learning by providing opportunities to prepare for class, practice and extend skills, and apply ideas creatively. Completing homework assignments also helps students learn responsibility and time management.

Students in fourth grade have homework four times a week and only occasionally on weekends. Students in fifth grade are assigned daily homework and the equivalent of a daily homework assignment over the weekend. Teachers coordinate assignments so that students should be able to complete work for all subjects in 45 to 90 minutes.

In the Upper House, students generally have homework every night. While it is difficult to provide an accurate measure of the time it will take each child to complete homework on any given night, the following is a guide for the time students should spend on homework each night:

- Students in sixth grade should expect to spend one and a half to two hours;
- Students in seventh and eighth grade usually spend two to two and a half hours.

These estimates should be taken into consideration when planning a child's extracurricular activity schedule.

Students can work on studying, projects, or homework during the Morning Academic Engagement Period when they have access to their teachers, and during study halls.

PROGRESS REPORTING

Communication between the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and teachers takes place throughout the year. Advisors contact home on a regular basis to share successes and discuss any concerns about the student's life at school. To review the student's social and emotional and academic progress, the parent(s) or caregivers(s) annually participate in two, scheduled conferences with the advisor(s)—one in the fall and one in late spring.

In all grades, parent(s) or caregiver(s) receive reports on progress that include feedback elaborating on the student's learning experiences, strengths, and challenges.

In the Upper House, student report cards with letter grades are available to families in Veracross at the end of each trimester. At the end of the first and second trimester, students receive narrative comments from each teacher that provide a deeper understanding of their performance and the next steps to take with their learning. At the end of the third trimester, teachers may write narrative comments for students whose grade average has gone up or down a full letter grade or whose average is D+ or below. These additional academic reports are designed to provide both students and parent(s) or caregiver(s) with prescriptive suggestions for improving learning.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

MKA follows a tiered support model. Students experiencing academic difficulty should first ask their teachers for extra help. Students may meet with teachers during the Academic Engagement Period, recess, or after school. Parents or caregivers, as well as students, should contact the student's advisor if additional support is needed. For more information, see MKA's Guidelines for Support in the MKA Handbook.

If appropriate, the teacher or advisor may suggest working with the grade-level learning specialist to implement more targeted interventions. If warranted, a grade-level learning specialist or school counselor may recommend an additional evaluation to better understand the student's strengths and challenges.

EVALUATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Students whose academic performance is impacted by a learning, psychological, or medical disability must provide current documentation and follow MKA's accommodations process as outlined in the MKA Handbook. Learning specialists and school counselors can provide families with appropriate clinician referrals and guide them through the evaluation process (for more information, see MKA Guidelines for Assistance to Students with Learning, Psychological, and Medical Challenges in the MKA Handbook). All communication, rating scales, and feedback forms should go through the learning specialist or school counselor, who obtains signed consent from families.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

At the end of each trimester, the Assistant Head of Campus reviews Upper House report cards. Students with two or more grades below C- are placed on academic probation.

When a student is placed on academic probation, the Assistant Head of Campus sends a letter notifying the student's parent(s) or caregiver(s) and advisor of the student's probationary status. While on academic probation, the student must attend an after-school study hall with the grade-level learning specialist for one hour, twice a week. On these days, students on sports teams miss practices and away games without penalty. They are allowed to participate in home games.

If a student is on academic probation for two trimesters during one year, the Head of Campus addresses the situation with the student and their parent(s) or caregiver(s). A student on academic probation at the end of the school year starts the following school year on academic probation.

The academic probation policy is different for students in sixth grade at the end of the first trimester. Rather than being placed on academic probation, the student and their advisor have a meeting with the Assistant Head of Campus. The advisor communicates the results of the meeting and the seriousness of the situation to the parent(s) or caregiver(s). In subsequent trimesters, students in sixth grade on academic probation attend the after-school study hall.

TUTORING

Before a family hires a tutor without a teacher's suggestion, the student should seek extra help from their teacher (see Academic Support). If a student needs more content-specific help than their teacher can provide during regular, extra-help sessions, the teacher may suggest an outside tutor after consulting with the Department Chair and notifying the student's advisor. MKA teachers who are not currently teaching the student may provide assistance outside the school day, or the Department Chair may recommend additional, qualified tutors. Parent(s)/caregiver(s) also have the option of finding a tutor independently. All tutoring arrangements are made directly between the parent(s)/caregiver(s) and the tutor. In all cases, a student will get the most out of working with a tutor when the tutor is in contact with the student's teacher. In addition, all work submitted by a student must represent the student's work and ideas, rather than those of a tutor.

HOME INSTRUCTION AND EXTENDED MEDICAL LEAVE

Should a student experience an extended absence from school, MKA faculty, under the supervision of the Assistant Head of Campus and the Office of Student Support, will provide assignments for the student. MKA faculty assess work assigned on a Home Study. The Head of Campus must approve any exception to this policy.

A student absent from school for an extended period of time for medical reasons may be eligible to apply for home tutoring support through state-funded Chapter 192 services. A doctor's note verifying the diagnosis and estimated length of absence must accompany an application for home instruction. The school can help the family to complete the application process only after the student has been

out of school for at least 10 consecutive days (or 20 cumulative days). Tutors may not be available in all disciplines. When available, the Educational Services Commission may provide tutors for two hours each week per discipline for a maximum of 60 school days. In the event of a lengthy medical absence—generally exceeding 60 school days at one time or in aggregate—a student may be asked to withdraw from MKA. The Head of Campus will consider cases on an individual basis.

COURSE RECOMMENDATION PROCESS—EIGHTH TO NINTH GRADE ONLY

Department recommendations for ninth grade are made in the spring of students' eighth-grade year and are based on factors that include, but are not limited to: classroom performance; the ability to work independently; preparation for and participation in class; and a minimum grade requirement. Upper School honors courses are accelerated courses for qualified students who have shown exceptional ability and who work well independently. This designation indicates one or more of the following about a course as compared to the standard course: it moves more quickly; covers more topics and/or delves more deeply into the subject matter; and/or requires a greater level of self-directed inquiry.

A recommendation means that a student may take that course, not that they must take it. During Spring Conference Day, students collaborate with their parent(s) or caregiver(s) and advisors to submit course requests for the subsequent school year. Students are encouraged to complete the most challenging academic program that allows them to pursue their passions in which they can be successful and find joy in learning while keeping balance in mind.

After the end of the third trimester, teachers review recommendations and may amend them. Students may find that they are recommended for courses for which they had not been recommended earlier, or that they are no longer recommended for courses for which they originally had a recommendation. Teachers notify students and their parent(s) or caregiver(s) by email in mid-June if there is a change in recommendation(s).

LANGUAGE ARTS / ENGLISH

The language arts/English curriculum spirals to provide skills practice at increasing levels of mastery with many topics revisited during the middle school years. Five critical and interrelated experiences provide the structure for study: response to literature through individual and group activities; reading self-selected works; rhetorical skills, such as discussion and presentation; composition; and the study of language patterns, including vocabulary, grammar, and usage. Vocabulary is taught as a reading strategy that involves inferring meaning from contextual clues in the literature. A variety of teacher-created exercises address different learning modalities.

Students experience the connection between reading, writing, and speaking each day. Informal writing in journals and notebooks helps students explore new ideas, focus thinking, and spark discussion. Students use the writing process to generate original thinking in forms that may include personal narratives, short fiction, poetry, interviews, news articles, and formal essays. All aspects of the writing process, including using multiple drafts for revising and editing, holding conferences with peers and the teacher, and publishing, help students develop ownership of their pieces. Students share and celebrate their final pieces in a variety of ways, which may include bulletin board displays, class books, dramatic performances, podcasts, and multimedia projects. Their writing may also be published in *Voices & Visions: Art & Writing from the Middle School*.

In the Upper House, the grammar curriculum focuses on parts of speech, parts of a sentence, punctuation, and usage. A well-articulated scope and sequence for each grade allows students to be able to identify how words, phrases, and clauses function within a sentence. The goal is for students to leverage their mastery of specific grammar topics to improve their sentence writing. Students use materials created by their teachers as well as online activities to supplement their contextual study of grammar and writing mechanics.

FOURTH GRADE

Reading and Writing Workshops

The literacy program focuses on helping students become lifelong, independent readers and writers who are confident and passionate. MKA's research-based, workshop approach includes mini-lessons and ample time for students to practice skills and respond to feedback. As part of their targeted instruction in Reading Workshop, teachers often use selections from novels, poetry, and short stories to model reading strategies for students. Students choose their own books at their independent reading levels and track their progress by examining reading habits using learning progressions, such as enhancing stamina or varying genres. During independent reading time, teachers meet with students, either individually or in small groups, to help strengthen their skills as readers. Students also read in book clubs during the year; they read a few, whole-class novels, such as *How Tia Lola Came to Stay* by Julia Alvarez, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, and *Tiger Rising* by Kate DiCamillo. During the nonfiction unit, students gather facts, explore text features, and learn to separate facts from opinions as they synthesize information from a variety of nonfiction texts.

During Writing Workshop, students use the steps of the writing process to hone their skills in a variety of structures and genres, including realistic fiction, persuasive essay, poetry, research, graphic novels, and feature articles. The writing process begins with mini-lessons about collecting topics and using planning tools to develop strong story ideas. As they develop their work, students incorporate the craft and structure of mentor pieces in their own writing through multiple revisions and the editing process. Grammar is embedded within Writing Workshop through differentiated mini-lessons and during one-on-one conferences with students. Use of laptops during the writing process helps to facilitate drafting and proofreading. Applications in the Google Suite offer varied formatting and multimedia options for the written word. Final drafts of all completed projects are celebrated with publishing parties that allow students to share their work with their peers and receive feedback.

FIFTH GRADE
Reading and Writing Workshops

The fifth-grade literacy program is designed to allow students the opportunity to practice writing meaningful compositions daily and to read both for pleasure and academic purposes while fostering a true love and appreciation for literary expression.

Our Reading Workshop curriculum emphasizes student choice in book selection and allows students to select texts of high personal interest. Our units of study include Interpretation Book Clubs, Fantasy, Argument and Advocacy, and Nonfiction. These units stress the skills of analyzing theme, identifying symbolism in literature, and developing comprehension strategies for the increasing challenges of nonfiction texts. Our curriculum is anchored in student choice; thus, students can self-select independent reading books from a varied classroom library based on their interests and reading levels. Reading conferences with the teacher are designed to give students feedback in "real time" as they are working and to provide student-specific coaching and interventions that strengthen their development as individual readers. Students learn to recognize character complexity, support theses, and search for theme-related clues. Readers learn that universal themes can be used as key concepts for understanding their personal lives and the world around them. Assigned literature includes *Home of the Brave* by Katherine Applegate, *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt, *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths* by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire, and *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman. Students also continue to explore a variety of literary genres and develop independence and agency in their reading lives through book clubs.

In Writing Workshop, students learn a variety of strategies for generating ideas to develop into entries in their writers' notebooks. Mentor texts and examples of student work are used to model good writing by providing examples of figurative language; effective dialogue; and appropriate use of grammar, syntax, and structure. Additionally, students have opportunities to develop writing stamina through daily practice and personal goal setting for their lives as writers.

Students complete their drafting process and are given frequent and specific instruction to improve their revising and editing skills through mini-lessons and feedback during individual conferences. Students continue to learn spelling and grammar through practice, and they take responsibility for mastery in their own writing.

SIXTH GRADE
Reading for Evidence and Writing with Voice

Rising sixth-grade students read two books from a list of six novels that explore a variety of themes, including family relationships and identity. Through small group discussions of summer books, students establish classroom norms for the rest of the year. Summer reading projects or writing assignments give the teacher valuable information about the student as a reader. Students learn a variety of reading strategies through the class texts, which include *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis; *The Extraordinary Cases of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. In particular, students learn to annotate the texts for a deeper understanding of character, conflict, and theme. The range of genres, including realistic and dystopian fiction, 19th century mystery, and poetic memoir, offers the students different narrative structures for telling a story. The poetry unit begins with excerpts from *brown girl dreaming*, a memoir by Jacqueline Woodson written in verse, and continues with the works of other modern poets. During this unit, students have the opportunity to pick their own independent books written in verse and analyze them for deeper understanding.

Students explore the fundamentals of good paragraph writing, including main idea and supporting details, and they learn to develop effective leads and conclusions. Sixth-grade writing includes journal responses to literature, literary essays, and poetry writing through the creation of a portfolio. In addition to learning

formal writing skills, students develop their creativity through project work. Projects include a protagonist identity project, which demonstrates understanding of the mystery genre, as well as debates to help students analyze a story, support their ideas with evidence, and build rhetorical skills. Grammar units on parts of speech, parts of the sentence, and punctuation help students construct better sentences with more attention to voice. Vocabulary units are culled from the literature during the first half of the year and from a workbook focused on Greek and Latin roots for the latter half.

SEVENTH GRADE
Reading for Character and Writing for Impact

Rising seventh-grade students read two books from a list of six novels that explore a coming-of-age theme, which informs much of their work in both reading and writing. Through small group discussions of summer books, students establish classroom norms for the rest of the year. Summer reading projects or writing assignments also give the teacher valuable information about the student as a reader.

For the pleasure of a great tale well told and the study of literary elements, students engage with a unit of short stories, ranging from classics by authors such as Toni Cade Bambara, Ray Bradbury, and Langston Hughes, to young adult fiction by authors such as Todd Strasser and Francisco Jiménez. With a focus on character development and theme, they continue exploring the coming-of-age theme through *All American Boys*, an award-winning novel by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely that includes multiple perspectives. Students begin their study of Shakespeare with a lecture on and exposure to English sonnets that enhance their facility with Shakespeare's language before encountering it in play form. This knowledge aids them in reading and performing a scene from Shakespeare in class and assists the many students who choose to participate in the seventh-grade theatre production of one of Shakespeare's plays (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *Twelfth Night*).

Students' study of the writer's craft through short fiction culminates in writing creative pieces. A study of expository writing then informs an essay written in response to *All American Boys*. Students continue to hone their skills by writing clear, focused paragraphs and gain expertise in forming thesis statements supported by textual evidence. Throughout the year, students write responses in paper or electronic journals to process what they are thinking and to reflect upon strategies for learning new reading and writing skills. Grammar topics include prepositional phrases, complements, and the rules of punctuation. For the unit on punctuation, students must identify the rules for commas, semicolons, and colons and apply their understanding of grammar and punctuation to improve their writing. Vocabulary is culled from the literature throughout the year.

EIGHTH GRADE
Reading for Self-Discovery and Writing for Action

Rising eighth-grade students read two books from a list of six books that explore the themes of belonging, acceptance, and identity. During the year, they read texts that investigate themes of identity and the journey to self-discovery as metaphor through contemporary and classic texts, such as John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*; the poetry of Langston Hughes in the context of the Harlem Renaissance; *The Odyssey* by Homer; and the war unit, which explores narrative nonfiction from soldiers and journalists, including Sebastian Junger's *Tribe*. The latter text builds on the autonomy and reading stamina developed during our prior units and is designed as an independent read at the end of the school year.

Throughout the year, students learn reading strategies for fiction and nonfiction to help them understand nuances of both whole-class and self-selected, independent reading books. During the nonfiction unit, students read challenging texts, such as Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*, Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Rachel Simmons' *Odd Girl Out*, Margot Lee Shetterly's *Hidden Figures*, Temple Grandin's *Animals in Translation*, and Michael Lewis' *Moneyball*, to name a few. Conferring with the teacher supports students' progress with reading, writing assignments, projects, and other activities and assessments, often through a shared notebook.

Students learn to write in a variety of genres, including the literary essay, feature article, poetry, personal narrative, and formal response to literature. All students keep journals, which are used as tools to enhance the writing experience. When doing nonfiction reading and writing, students research journalistic topics and write a feature article for publication—a process that often raises students' awareness of social justice issues and the need for social action. Students also research the Harlem Renaissance before studying the poetry of Langston Hughes; the unit culminates in students writing original poems based on "Theme for English B."

Grammar topics include noun, adjective, and adverb clauses and the rules of punctuation. The unit on punctuation is a review of seventh-grade material at a much more challenging level. Students must identify the rules for commas, semicolons, and colons and apply their understanding of grammar and punctuation to improve their writing. Vocabulary is culled from the literature during the first half of the year and supplemented by a workbook focused on Greek and Latin roots for the latter half.

Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for English 1, English 1 Honors, or English 1 Critical Reading and Writing.

SOCIAL STUDIES / HISTORY

The Middle School social studies/history curriculum is focused on continually answering essential questions such as: How and why do people and societies change? How do people's beliefs and value systems affect the way they live? How does geography impact the development of civilization? At each grade level, students use these frameworks to examine various civilizations and cultures. Students are taught not only how to acquire historical knowledge by examining primary and secondary sources but also how to identify the larger patterns, trends, and ethical issues that exist throughout history and throughout the world. The social studies/history curriculum encourages students to thoughtfully engage with others in dialogue about current and historical events. Students participate in conversations to raise their level of awareness of local and global issues and learn how to carry on civil discourse with those who represent a variety of opinions and life experiences. Throughout the history and social studies program, students develop historical thinking and research skills, including information gathering, evaluation and use of sources, note taking, organization, and synthesis and analysis of information. They learn the importance of clear, accurate, written expression and documentation of evidence. To demonstrate understanding, students create a variety of artifacts, including historical essays, diaries, oral presentations, maps, and multimedia slideshows.

FOURTH GRADE
Communities on the Move: Understanding the History of America, Migration, and Immigration

In social studies, students explore geography, focusing on the United States to gain an understanding of how it impacts civilizations. Examining primary source materials, analyzing maps, and practicing research skills all help students gain understanding of various geographical regions.

Fourth-grade students begin with a study of map skills and the geography of the five regions of the United States to lay the foundation for our studies. Through a study of human migration and Native Americans, students work collaboratively, focusing on Native American communities and how basic needs and geographic factors influenced their movement and cultures. A study of Colonial America follows to highlight the development of a nation, and this study includes an examination of the history of racially based enslavement in the 13 colonies and beyond. A field trip to Waterloo Village enriches our study of Native Americans and Colonial America. Students supplement learning gathered from this trip with primary and secondary source research. Following an overview of the American Revolution, students study the causes and consequences of Westward Expansion.

Our study concludes with an examination of industrialization and a comparison of the experiences of European immigration during the Great Wave of Immigration, Chinese immigration during the Gold Rush, and modern immigration today. An in-person exploration of Ellis Island brings a greater understanding of European immigration. Students compare the Ellis Island experience to other immigrant experiences, including entry through Angel Island. They conclude the unit by learning about the modern immigration process. Drawing on all of their learning, students focus on a particular group to study further and complete a culminating project: a paper, article, or slide presentation that introduces the culture of their focus group, the journey that the immigrants embarked on, and the places they settled in America.

FIFTH GRADE
Exploring the Origins of Civilization

Students examine the origins of civilization and culture to explore and answer questions about Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Meso-American cultures. They apply their understanding as they analyze Mesopotamian art to gain insight into the culture of Sumer and examine the origins of law in Hammurabi's Code. In conjunction with their study of ancient Egypt, students choose a topic of interest for a thesis-driven research paper. They create essential, guiding questions that scaffold note taking; and they conduct a research process, which includes a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City to examine and interpret ancient Egyptian artifacts. The geographic area of study then shifts to

the early civilizations of Meso- and South America, as well as the contemporary cultures of Indigenous peoples in these regions. To conclude the year, students then explore the culture and government of ancient Athens and enjoy a feast of Greek delicacies. Through each of these explorations of time and culture, students gain an understanding of how ideas, practices, and technology spread in similar ways around the world.

SIXTH GRADE
Cultures and Beliefs: Examining the Early Civilizations of the Middle East, India, China, and Japan

Sixth-grade historians immerse themselves in an exploration of the GRAPES of ancient societies: geography, religion, achievements, politics, economics, and social structures. The curriculum aims to instill empathy for and understanding of all cultures by encouraging students to develop the skill of productive dialogue. Students use numerous online and print sources, including the text *National Geographic World History: Great Civilizations*.

Student coursework includes a study of the Silk Road and how its trade routes influenced the development of the ancient world. A unit on ancient India introduces students to the rich history and culture of the Near East, including an introduction to Hinduism and Buddhism. Students examine the cultures in the ancient Far East Asia as well, including a study of ancient and medieval China and Japan. The study of ancient China covers the enormity of the ancient dynasties, as well as the religious traditions of Daoism and Confucianism. Students write a thesis-driven research paper on one or two of the ancient dynasties and explore the ways in which their chosen dynasty impacted Chinese society at that time. Their exploration of the social structure, religion, art, and lifestyle of several civilizations in the ancient and medieval time periods also helps students to frame their understanding of the history that is still deeply rooted in cultures of the world today. After studying the Far East, students begin their study of the three Abrahamic religions of the world during our People of the Book unit: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students study the Israelites, the emergence of Christianity, and the development and spread of Islam; they explore the holy sites, texts, and beliefs of these three religions to best understand the intersections between them.

SEVENTH GRADE
Contact and Merging of Cultures: Examining Europe and Africa

Why does the contact of cultures have both intended and unintended consequences? Students in seventh grade spend the year exploring the "golden ages" of some of the Mediterranean and Atlantic border areas and begin by establishing a firm foundation in geography skills. Students learn about the rise of the Roman Republic, followed by the fall of the Western Roman Empire. They also explore the continuation of the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire. From there, they examine the roots of the mighty West African civilizations of Ghana and Mali, long-distance trading partners of the Mediterranean empires. The focus returns to Europe with feudal society and the Middle Ages, and then transitions to the Italian rebirth of learning and culture and its subsequent spread throughout the rest of Europe. This study of the European Renaissance corresponds cross-curricularly with the English department's study of Shakespeare, which includes the study of a play in English class and the staging of that play as a theatrical presentation. Students also learn about the impact of the printing press and the increased spread of information, which leads to a focus on the causes and impacts of the resulting Protestant Reformation in Europe and beyond.

After choosing a research question related to our study of ancient Rome, students complete a research project from beginning to end. Classes focus on the skills and organizational techniques necessary to plan, research, write, and revise a research paper. Students engage in other research projects throughout the year, such as researching a famous Black figure from American history to portray in the Black History Month Living Museum and researching an aspect of European Renaissance culture to display in a Renaissance Fair.

EIGHTH GRADE

Native Peoples, Colonial Settlers, and European Empires in North America

Eighth-grade social studies makes history come alive by asking students to experience history on a daily basis. Students are encouraged to think about the past and not just to memorize—to understand that they are the products of past generations and have a responsibility to continue that legacy through responsible and active citizenship. As they study the many groups and individuals responsible for North American history, students continually ask questions about inclusivity and belonging throughout history. Students experience history through a multitude of resources, including primary sources; art; literature; movies; music; resources from Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia; and multiple primary and secondary texts derived from a variety of credible, historical sources.

Coursework begins with examining the lenses through which we view history, specifically Native Americans, Africans, and the European settlers during early contact. By studying the nature of encounters between Indigenous groups like the Lenape, the Powhatan, and the Wampanoag, students learn to see history through different worldviews. Classes then examine the diversity of the thirteen colonies and move to a brief study British political philosophy, Magna Carta, and the English Bill of Rights; so students can better understand underpinnings of the American Revolution. Students view and discuss key sections of the film *1776* to better understand the titanic issues that led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence, which united the nation yet also forged the causes for our cataclysmic Civil War. In this study, they expand their knowledge of various stakeholders during the war and the roles many groups played in the founding of the United States. Later, students explore the early American Republic from the failures of the Articles of Confederation to its replacement with the Constitution.

Studying the first presidential administrations, students make a case for whether Alexander Hamilton's or Thomas Jefferson's vision is better for the new nation. This analysis also helps students consider where they stand politically today. While studying sectionalism and expansion, students use these analyses as a basis for examining divisions within the nation. Additionally, students study the concept of judicial review through the foundational case of Marbury v. Madison and then through other, more recent, landmark Supreme Court decisions as they pertain to American citizenship and values.

With their constitutional understanding as a foundation, students study civics to become aware of the current U.S. political system and their potential to foster change. Students apply what they have learned throughout the year about the benefits and responsibilities given to them as citizens of the United States by identifying a civic problem, examining potential solutions, and implementing a plan to bring about change in their own communities.

Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for Modern World History or Modern World History Honors.

MATHEMATICS

The Middle School mathematics curriculum is designed for our students to explore and master mathematical concepts and to become effective problem solvers. In class, students are expected to actively participate, take risks, make and learn from mistakes, work collaboratively, and think flexibly. Projects and differentiated instruction provide students with opportunities for exploring math concepts that ensure they are both appropriately challenged and comfortable with learning math. Students have various opportunities to explore mathematical concepts through national math contests and competitions and collaborative and independent exploration during math clubs.

Through the research-based Amplify Desmos Math program, Lower House students become confident, flexible, and creative problem solvers. The curriculum enables students to develop conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and real-world applications; and they are introduced to abstract mathematical concepts through real-life experiences. The Amplify Desmos Math curriculum encourages students to extend their thinking by exploring not only **what** the answer is, but also **how** they arrived at it and **why** their reasoning makes sense.

The mathematics program in the Upper House provides students with two sequences of study. Students in sixth grade take Pre-Algebra. Students in grade seven take Introduction to Algebra, Algebra 1A (the first half of Algebra 1), or Algebra 1. All students complete their study of Algebra 1 by the end of Middle School, and some students complete Geometry. Teachers place students in math classes according to their math background, learning habits, and achievement.

AMPLIFY DESMOS MATH *(Fourth Grade)*

Fourth-grade students build their number sense. They explore addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division methods. Additionally, they develop an understanding of fraction equivalence and perform addition, subtraction, and multiplication of fractions. While studying measurement and geometry, students convert units and apply formulas to compute the area and perimeter of geometric figures. Woven into their learning, game-play and manipulatives allow for choice and collaboration to enhance students' understanding of the concepts.

AMPLIFY DESMOS MATH *(Fifth Grade)*

Fifth-grade students develop an understanding of signed numbers, percents, integers, divisibility rules, and traditional long division. Additionally, students collect, organize, and interpret data.

Problem solving is a key component of the curriculum. Students explore problem-solving strategies through real-life problems, such as creating a working budget and designing a space within set dimensions. As students engage in solving open-response problems, special emphasis is placed on providing convincing arguments and understanding others' reasoning.

PRE-ALGEBRA *(Sixth Grade)*

Pre-Algebra students begin the upper-level mathematics sequence by working with variables to develop key mathematical skills, including order of operations, ratios, proportions, inequalities, word problems, graphing, and two-step equations. The study of algebra naturally evolves from recognizing, describing, and making generalizations from pre-algebra patterns studied.

Students extend their understanding of the number system and integers to include rational and irrational numbers and negative exponents. They explore the link between verbal, symbolic, and graphic models; and they use these models to solve problems. Students make connections to geometry as they use

formulas and variables to describe the perimeter, area, surface area, and volume of various geometric figures. Topics also include an introduction to linear functions including rate of change, slope, and graphing on a coordinate grid. Students apply the concepts they learn developing mathematical models that help them make sense of social, environmental, and economic issues, such as finding areas of irregular figures in Times Square to see how much of the visual space is composed of advertisements and combining the study of measures of center and percents to determine wealth distribution.

Students in Pre-Algebra may be recommended for Introduction to Algebra, Algebra 1A, or Algebra 1.

INTRODUCTION TO ALGEBRA *(Seventh Grade)*

Introduction to Algebra is a transitional mathematics course designed for students who are ready to move beyond basic pre-algebra but may benefit from a gradual introduction to Algebra 1 concepts. The course reinforces and extends key pre-algebra skills, such as operations with integers and rational numbers, proportional reasoning, and basic equation solving, while introducing foundational Algebra 1 topics, including linear equations and inequalities, the coordinate plane, functions, and introductory work with polynomials.

Emphasis is placed on conceptual understanding, mathematical reasoning, and real-world application. Students develop fluency in algebraic language and problem-solving strategies through hands-on activities, structured practice, and collaborative learning. This course prepares students for success in a full Algebra 1 curriculum by strengthening core skills and building a solid algebraic foundation.

Introduction to Algebra students will take Algebra 1 in eighth grade.

ALGEBRA 1A *(Seventh Grade)*

Algebra 1A begins with helping students transition from thinking and working arithmetically with numbers to thinking algebraically about numbers. Students are introduced to and begin practicing algebraic language theory, particularly how to read and translate the symbolic and theoretical language of algebra into mathematical statements that describe relationships. Of equal value are the analytic, relational, and qualitative reasoning skills students develop that enable them to think abstractly and logically. This material reflects key concepts previously presented but with a more purposeful and differentiated approach to engage all learners. This course then progresses through the various topics in algebra, such as solving multi-step equations and inequalities; understanding real and rational numbers, simple and complex fractions, rates, ratios, proportions, and direct variations; finding slope and rate of change; graphing linear equations and functions; and solving and graphing linear inequalities. Students learn to write linear equations and inequalities in standard, slope-intercept, and point-slope form. Real-world examples complement lessons, such as graphing linear functions representing wages of workers, cell phone plans, car rentals, utility bills, shipping costs, distances traveled, savings, population growth, resource consumption, carbon emissions, inflation trends, and unemployment rates. Students choose the best deal for a given situation using systems of linear equations. To enhance learning and comprehension, students engage with manipulatives as well as technology.

Algebra 1A students may be recommended for Algebra 1B or Algebra 1 in eighth grade.

ALGEBRA 1B *(Eighth Grade)*

In Algebra 1B, students further develop skills learned in Algebra 1A—such as recognizing patterns, describing relationships, and formulating mathematical statements—but move on to more in-depth, abstract, algebraic concepts by developing algorithms and applying algebraic properties to solve mathematical statements. Students examine exponential properties of multiplication and division, exponential growth, and decay functions; solve quadratics using factoring and the quadratic equation; explore the Pythagorean theorem and its converse; relate exponential and quadratic functions to real-life situations; and work through radical and rational functions and expressions. Real-world examples include exploring exponential growth and decay through interpreting real-life data based on incarceration rates, transmission of viruses, and the monetary worth of electronics, as well as using measurements of height and initial velocity to determine if a player will make a basket from the three-point line.

Students in Algebra 1B may be recommended for Geometry or Geometry Honors in ninth grade.

ALGEBRA 1 *(Seventh and Eighth Grades)*

In Algebra 1, students extend the depth of their algebraic understanding. They learn the algebra of linear equations and inequalities, including probability concepts with algebraic fractions, and focus on graphing techniques. Students learn the rules of exponents, including solving for unknown exponents. They investigate the properties of systems of equations, polynomials, and square roots. In the context of contemporary applications in science and personal finance, they study curvilinear functions, represented by exponential growth and parabolas. Students explore how to collect and analyze data for independent and dependent variables and determine best fit lines and their equations in order to make predictions. Testing those predictions leads to an analysis of other variables involved. Students apply the concepts they learn to real-world examples such as evaluating the height and shoe size of NBA players to see if the relationship is linear.

Students in seventh-grade Algebra 1 may be recommended for Algebra 1B or Geometry in eighth grade. Students in eighth-grade Algebra 1 may be recommended for Integrated Geometry, Geometry, or Geometry Honors in ninth grade.

GEOMETRY *(Eighth Grade)*

Geometry begins with an introduction to the terms and methods through which the field of Euclidean geometry was developed, and students use these fundamental building blocks throughout the year to derive powerful theorems and develop an understanding of geometric concepts. They learn to compose formal proofs, including the traditional, two-column form, to promote an understanding of the thought process required when working in a deductive system. Students apply Algebra 1 skills to solve challenging problems in a geometric context. Topics studied include triangles, quadrilaterals, circles, and other polygons; congruent and similar figures; parallel and perpendicular lines; area, volume, and surface area; and trigonometry.

While often abstract and theoretical, the study of geometry has a connection to the real world, as it provides a framework for understanding spatial relationships and forms. Conceptualizing and describing the shapes, structures, and patterns that underlie both natural and human-made environments help students to better understand the physical and spatial worlds in which we live.

This course presents the same content and is at the same level as the Geometry Honors course offered at the Upper School. Geometry students may be recommended for Algebra 2, Algebra 2 Honors, or Advanced Algebra 2 Honors.

SCIENCE

The science curriculum is designed to help students develop STEM skills and a STEM+ mindset that they will use to navigate a complex world and face tomorrow's toughest challenges. Intended to address the unique characteristics of Middle School learners, it engages student-scientists in their learning through experiments and observations. Students study the relationships between force and motion, Earth and space, energy and the atmosphere, organisms and their ecosystems, and the behavior of matter. To better understand these natural phenomena, students build on their prior knowledge and experience to apply problem-solving strategies in new contexts and develop their ability to formulate hypotheses, explore relationships, discover patterns, and build evidence-based arguments. Working both independently and collaboratively, students have many opportunities to design experiments, test procedures, collect and analyze data, use data to support conclusions, and communicate findings using the scientific principles they study. Throughout the Middle School science program, the students are consistently pushed to engage with and develop a nuanced understanding of the skills of science. They grow their scientific literacy based on the established framework of the scientific method, including conducting authentic research and experiencing science firsthand.

FOURTH GRADE

Emerging Scientist: Investigating Forces and Motion through STEM

Fourth-grade science engages students in their learning as scientists in ways that mirror the real world. It capitalizes on students' natural curiosity and harnesses their creativity to develop a passion for science and scientific inquiry. Students learn about the world around them by developing scientific skills: observing, recording data, asking testable questions, making predictions, testing ideas, and reflecting on their thinking. Students learn how to use science tools in context.

Throughout the year, students use the engineering design process to solve a series of STEM challenges by designing and building simple devices. They ask questions, identify problems, plan, create, and test their designs of catapults, balloon cars, marble mazes, straw gliders, and simple machines. The STEM devices are then used to introduce how various physical forces work and affect motion. Forces covered this year include gravity, applied force, elastic force, and friction.

The year culminates with students researching global climate change by exploring their physical and social impact on a region of the world to which they have a personal connection.

FIFTH GRADE

Understanding Our World: Matter and Our Food Systems

Fifth-grade scientists focus on understanding the building blocks of our world as they begin the year studying the chemistry of matter. They answer the question, "What is the difference between a mixture and a solution?" By using different methods to separate mixtures and solutions, they learn about concentration, homogeneous and heterogeneous mixtures, and solubility. As they engage in these activities, students also develop important skills in experimental planning, identifying and controlling variables, and working collaboratively with their peers. Building on these STEM understandings, students learn about chemical reactions and use the knowledge they have gained to plan and conduct scientific investigations, enhancing their critical thinking and teamwork abilities.

Through hands-on experiences growing and cultivating food, students conclude the year by examining their ecological footprint through the lens of what they eat. The garden curriculum ties in with the fifth-grade language arts book, *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman.

SIXTH GRADE
Our Home in Context: Planet Earth in Space and Its Changing Climate

Sixth-grade science helps students to understand their world from a scientific perspective. They increase their scientific literacy by drawing their observations, making inferences, developing hypotheses, and learning to design experiments. Through hands-on STEM challenges, they also engage in the engineering design process.

Students come to understand Earth as a planet and as our home within the larger context of the cosmos. They tap into their natural curiosity about their world and the solar system by studying Earth's climate systems, the phenomena related to the Sun-Earth-Moon system, and our cosmic neighborhood. Through a series of hands-on activities and modeling, students visualize Earth in comparison to other bodies in the Solar System, including the Sun, Moon, and other diverse objects. Students grapple with the concepts of scale and orbital motion.

By assuming the lens of NASA scientists, past and present, students are able to explore the interconnected nature of Earth, our cosmic neighborhood, and the practical challenges involved in space exploration. Students develop scientific research skills by choosing one specific object in the Solar System to study in detail and presenting what they learn to their peers. Over the course of the year, students can increasingly appreciate how greater understanding of Earth provides insight into the nature of space, and vice versa.

Through investigating the Earth, Moon, and Sun, students analyze models and data to understand lunar phases, eclipses, seasons, forces of motion, gravity, and the three-dimensional fabric of space itself. While examining the evidence for and impacts of climate change, students reflect on what is being done currently, as well as what can be done in both the near and distant future, to address these complex issues, including how they can make a positive impact on the world.

SEVENTH GRADE
Our Home in Context: Diversity of Life & Populations and Ecosystems

Students begin the year honing their laboratory skills by making precise measurements using specific equipment in a proper manner. Students study the diversity of life and develop an understanding of the structure-function relationships in living organisms. They first explore the common characteristics of all living organisms and then learn how cells function as the basic unit of life. Through extensive work utilizing compound microscopes, students study individual plant and animal cells as well as microscopic organisms, such as protists. They also conduct in-depth investigations of key structure-function relationships in cells.

Seventh-grade scientists explore the components of ecosystems in depth. Students begin with an examination of the individual within an ecosystem and expand to consider the ecosystem as a whole. They investigate the biotic community and the abiotic environment by looking for patterns as they analyze data.

Students come to understand genetics as the science of heredity, a function of all living things that both maintains and transfers the code for reproducing life with similar traits from generation to generation. Students learn the basic genetic mechanisms that determine which traits individuals will express in a population and how organisms inherit traits from their parents. Finally, students begin to learn about adaptations and evolution in connection with their study of populations and ecosystems.

Throughout the year, students continue to develop, practice, and hone STEM skills in researching, designing, and conducting scientific experiments. Students also write a full lab report based on their research, experimentation, and analysis.

EIGHTH GRADE

Our Home in Context: The Chemistry of Matter & Independent Research

Students explore key chemistry concepts as they work to understand the nature of matter—its properties, composition, and structure. This understanding is fundamental to explaining many scientific phenomena and provides a key foundation for students to develop their own independent research projects during the eighth-grade year. Students begin the year by reviewing safety protocols and practicing their laboratory skills. They examine real-world situations that help them to develop an understanding of substances and how they change and interact physically and chemically, including elements, the periodic table, atomic structure, chemical bonding, phase changes, heat transfer, chemical reactions, and acids and bases.

As they develop their understanding both individually and collaboratively, they use their acquired STEM knowledge to answer real-world questions. Throughout their studies, students use the detailed Eighth-Grade Science Project Report Rubric to guide and support their laboratory investigations and analyses.

As a culmination of their Middle School science experience, students apply their understanding of science and the scientific process to conduct an independent research project of their own design. In the first half of the year, preparatory activities and assignments ensure students have the skills they need to complete their independent work successfully. Students choose a research topic based on their interest and apply the scientific process to investigate a problem that they have identified. Using the Science Project Report Rubric and outline templates for each stage of the process, students act as scientists as they research to create a testable question, develop a hypothesis, design an experiment, collect and analyze data, and present their results and conclusions in writing and through presentations to an audience of peers and adults in the community.

Students attending the Upper School may be recommended for Biology 1, Biology 1 Honors, or Biology 1 Science Research Honors based on their performance in the Chemistry Unit as well as their engagement with the 8th Grade Science Project.

WORLD LANGUAGE

In World Language courses, students explore language in a collaborative and interactive environment. They are immersed in the target language through a communicative approach that fosters mastery of the three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. Using a proficiency-based, student-centered, technology-enhanced, and spiraled curriculum, students build on previous knowledge and skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Relevant thematic units, such as identity, family, community, celebrations, school life, and global citizenship allow students to relate to the material in an authentic way.

Grammar study is introduced contextually to support communication, not memorization. To improve their aural proficiency, students practice listening to a variety of authentic audio resources representing the rich linguistic diversity of the countries where the target language is spoken.

In keeping with MKA's mission to create an innovative, inclusive learning environment that nurtures intellectual curiosity and empathy, the students in the Middle School World Language program explore language through culture; communicate with purpose; and recognize, respect, and value diverse worldviews. Through projects, celebrations, music, literature, and multimedia explorations, students investigate how language provides insight into global perspectives.

*A minimum of 5 students is required to offer any of the following language courses.

CHINESE, FRENCH, AND SPANISH: BUILDING COMMUNICATION SKILLS *(Fourth Grade)*

Fourth-grade students begin their Middle School world language journey with Mandarin Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà), French, or Spanish. Through songs, stories, games, movement, and multimedia, students build basic listening and speaking skills while developing an ear for the rhythm and sound of the language. Emphasis is placed on comprehensible input, repetition, and visual cues to support understanding. Cultural explorations allow students to make meaningful connections between language and cultural customs, foods, holidays, and daily life.

CHINESE, FRENCH, AND SPANISH: EXPANDING COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION *(Fifth Grade)*

Fifth-grade students of Chinese, French, or Spanish build on the foundation created in fourth grade by expanding their speaking and listening skills. Thematic units provide students with age-appropriate vocabulary and simple grammar. Students use a variety of resources, including technology, to practice what they learn and to demonstrate their understanding and mastery of vocabulary and basic grammar skills. They speak in simple sentences and answer questions in the target language, read short passages related to the thematic units, and practice writing grammatically correct sentences. Culture is infused in classroom activities that familiarize students with the everyday life of children their age in the culture of the target language.

At the end of fifth grade, students decide if they will enroll in French 1A, Chinese 1A, or Spanish 1A in sixth grade.

CHINESE LEVEL 1A *(Sixth and Seventh Grades)*

Through a wide variety of interactive activities, such as web-based practice and technology-infused projects, students focus on increasing oral proficiency with particular attention to acquiring accurate tones and pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà). Students learn vocabulary and grammar that enable them to describe themselves, family, and friends; explain daily routines; and use time expressions. The pinyin system of the romanization of the Chinese characters is used at first to introduce students to reading. Students begin to read and write simplified Chinese characters. Chinese culture, geography, and history are important components of the course and are taught through video clips, readings, and projects. At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to engage in a simple conversation and write using simplified Chinese characters.

CHINESE LEVEL 1B *(Seventh and Eighth Grades)*

Students continue the study of Chinese they began in the Level 1A class. They learn vocabulary related to day-to-day activities and the natural world, and they study a more advanced sentence structure. Through interactive activities and technology-infused projects, students continue to develop their skills; they focus on increasing oral proficiency with particular attention to acquiring accurate tones and pronunciation. In learning to read, they use the pinyin system of the romanization of Chinese characters. They continue to read and write simplified Chinese characters and write simple sentences about topics such as the weather, clothing, hobbies, sports, and school schedules and subjects. Students study culture, geography, and history through video clips, readings, and projects.

Eighth-grade students may be recommended for Upper School Level 1 or Level 2.

CHINESE LEVEL 2A *(Eighth Grade)*

Level 2A students of Chinese focus more on interactive communication in real life. A variety of innovative and interactive activities create an authentic language environment to prepare students to comprehend and engage with native speakers in daily conversations. Regular writing and reading practice incorporates theme-based topics, including ordering food, shopping, travel, etc., and helps students to expand vocabulary, internalize more complex grammatical constructions, and enhance comprehension. By the end of the year, students are able to demonstrate a higher level of proficiency.

Students may be recommended for Upper School Level 2 or Level 2 Honors.

FRENCH & SPANISH LEVEL 1A *(Sixth and Seventh Grades; Eighth Grade, Spanish Only)*

Level 1A students learn to express themselves about familiar themes, both orally and in writing. Students build a working vocabulary through continuous exposure to new words, learning in the target language, and frequent collaboration with peers. Through dialogues, storytelling, acting out scenarios, word games, and creating presentations, students build their proficiency with the language. They learn to describe themselves, family, school life, and leisure activities; and they learn how to use nouns, adjectives, and verbs through modeling, identifying patterns, and playing kinesthetic games. Basic reading strategies include recognizing cognates to deduce meaning. Language learners become more geographically aware of the countries of study and their relationships with the United States. By the end of the year, students are able to carry on a limited conversation and write in clear, concise sentences.

FRENCH & SPANISH LEVEL 1B *(Seventh and Eighth Grades)*

With increased proficiency, students in Level 1B are able to describe the details of their daily routines, such as going to places in town and participating in activities around the house. They are expected to demonstrate their learning both orally and in writing. Language learners expand their vocabulary base with words and expressions related to cooking, city and country life, household tasks, and pastimes, such as shopping and eating out. Realia, map talks, readings, and videos help students to better understand the lives and cultures of those living in the countries of study.

While Level 1B students continue to develop their listening and oral skills, they increasingly focus on reading comprehension and writing. Reading short stories reinforces basic reading strategies. Students develop an awareness of sentence structure and an increased understanding of grammar and its complexities through the writing and editing process. They regularly engage in collaborative tasks that promote practice, revision, and retention and enable them to correct themselves. Technology engages students and broadens their exposure to the target language. By the end of the year, students can express themselves both orally and in writing using the present tense. Spanish learners end the year with an introduction to the simple past tense.

Eighth-grade students in 1B may be recommended for Spanish or French Level 2 at the Upper School.

FRENCH & SPANISH LEVEL 2A *(Eighth Grade)*

Level 2A French and Spanish students move beyond pattern responses to expressing their own ideas in the target language. Exchanges between students and teacher reinforce learning through reading, writing, speaking, and listening practice that enhances vocabulary and grammar concepts. Through a variety of innovative exercises—including creating videos, commercials, interviews, and multimedia presentations—students engage authentically with the material. Regular writing projects enable students to describe and narrate events in a variety of verb tenses. Culturally based reading units provide students with opportunities to hone their reading strategies to enhance comprehension. By the end of the year, students are able to demonstrate proficiency at a higher level and show mastery of the present and past tenses.

Students may be recommended for Upper School Level 2 or Level 2 Honors.

FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS

By experiencing fine and performing arts study in a variety of art forms, students have many opportunities to learn about art genres, develop self-expression and self-discipline, and take creative risks.

In the Lower House, our process-oriented curriculum provides students in fourth and fifth grade with the opportunity to express themselves in new and more sophisticated ways. Through yearlong, musical performance classes in Chorus, Band, and Strings and quarterly classes in art, dance, theatre arts, and music, students come to appreciate the joy, beauty, and wonder of the arts and discover their limitless potential for creative expression. Students and teachers use SeeSaw, an online portfolio application, to demonstrate progress and learning.

In the Upper House, sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students choose among an even wider variety of yearlong and trimester-length production and performance classes. They continue to develop as artists and performers through these broader experiences and deeper exposures to the arts. In addition to potentially pursuing a passion, students are encouraged to explore areas of the arts that they are less familiar with as part of their journey as reflective humans and lifelong learners.

LOWER HOUSE YEARLONG COURSES

Fourth-grade students have the opportunity to participate in either Chorus, Concert Band, or Strings for their year-long concentration. Chorus allows students to learn foundational musical concepts and build related skills. Participating in Concert Band and Strings enables students to learn how to play an ensemble instrument. All groups rehearse during school as a full ensemble; group lessons for strings and band instrumental sections take place as well.

Fifth-grade students may choose Chorus, Concert Band, or Strings. As in the fourth grade, all three groups have full, yearlong rehearsals during school; the strings group lessons and band instrumental sections meet for small-group lessons. The Chorus and the Fourth-and Fifth-Grade Concert Bands each participate in a winter and spring concert, and the Strings participate in an annual performance, which is held other year at Carnegie Hall.

LOWER HOUSE QUARTERLY COURSES

Art

The fourth-grade art course focuses on the basic elements of art, such as shape, line, color, texture, and form. Using a variety of materials, students are encouraged to be creative in problem solving and to express themselves through art while they learn how to discuss their projects and ideas with others. In addition to their work as artists, students learn to speak the "language of art," as well as to examine works of great artists of the past.

The fifth-grade curriculum includes artist Alexander Calder, whose work is accessible to this age group through its playfulness and the simple shapes and colors that define it. In creating works based in the style of Calder's famous "Circus," students are introduced to kinetic art and contour line drawing. In collaboration with social studies, students create two-dimensional projects based on Greek mythology. Both fourth- and fifth-grade students periodically display selected work throughout the school.

Dance

Student dancers are engaged in an interactive exploration of the vocabulary, principles, and elements of many dance styles. Fourth- and fifth-grade dancers are introduced to the genres of ballet, modern, jazz, lyrical, hip-hop, ballroom, tap, and contemporary presented in cultural and historical contexts. Classes focus on students' development of kinesthetics, body awareness, technical ability, spatial expressiveness, and personal creativity.

Music

Through both instrumental and vocal music, fourth- and fifth-grade students develop the building blocks for appreciating music from a wide variety of world cultures. As they sing and play percussion instruments, students learn music notation, two-part harmony, rhythm, and solfège. Fourth-grade students examine *Peter and the Wolf* by Sergei Prokofiev. During this study, students become acquainted with orchestral instruments and themes.

In fifth grade, students explore how composers communicate with an audience through the artistry of the performer. Instruments are used to guide students in developing their musical skills. Students expand their knowledge and use of musical notation, and they complete the course by crafting and performing their own original, musical composition.

Theatre Arts

What is story? What are the parts that make up a story and how do we bring it to life? Fourth-grade students ask themselves these questions to create a space for thoughtful creativity. They explore the tools of an actor: the voice, the body, and the imagination. They then do a series of exercises in which they create unique characters and engage in short improvisations. Skills and content are interwoven in the creation of a theatrical piece based on this study.

The fifth-grade theatre curriculum directly relates to students' study of ancient Greece and Greek mythology. Students dive into Greek theatre as they learn about the first Western actors, the chorus, choral speaking, and the use of choreographed movement on stage. They then apply these tools to staging a short piece from *The Odyssey*.

UPPER HOUSE TRIMESTER COURSES (*Sixth and seventh grades meet 2.5 times per cycle during all three trimesters; eighth-grade classes meet 3 times per cycle during the first and third trimesters.*)

Media Art *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

Students study basic techniques for creating digital images and movies with an emphasis on the elements of design and the principles of composition. Students practice these skills using Adobe Photoshop, a powerful tool for manipulating and creating digital art and animation. Over the trimester, students practice self-critique in written artist statements and group critique as a class.

Visual Art *(Sixth and Seventh Grades)*

As they continue their study of the basic elements of art, such as color, line, and shape, sixth-grade students learn to express themselves through drawing, collage, and painting and explore principles of art, including repetition, emphasis, and rhythm. Students routinely examine examples of contemporary art and great artists of the past. The focus of seventh-grade art class is drawing. Students learn to represent three-dimensional images on a two-dimensional surface. In conjunction with the seventh-grade study of the Renaissance in social studies, students learn to draw using perspective. Focusing on conceptual art, eighth-grade students are encouraged to take chances with their art and explore unconventional ways of expressing their ideas. Students are exposed to many of today's elite artists and have the chance to discuss their works with classmates using a refined art vocabulary. Class critiques for every project help students to celebrate the strengths of their work and plan for revisions. Students periodically display selected work throughout the school.

Modern and Contemporary Art *(Eighth Grade)*

Focusing on conceptual art and graphic design, students are encouraged to take chances with their art and explore unconventional ways of expressing their ideas. The majority of the projects are three dimensional. Students create work inspired by an introduction to the works of contemporary artists and graphic design techniques. They participate in informed discussions about these works and develop the skills to participate effectively in class critiques, which are held for every project. Selected student works are periodically displayed around the school.

Dance *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

Dance explores the dynamic fundamentals of choreography and varied techniques of classical ballet, modern, jazz, Latin, Caribbean, tap, and hip-hop. Students examine four elements of choreography—design, dynamics, motivation, and rhythm—and explore the historical importance of each. Students develop and perform engaging, original choreography projects and have the opportunity to self-assess by viewing their projects on video. All sixth-grade students explore Revelations by Alvin Ailey.

Keyboards and Theory *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

In this course, students learn the inner workings of how music is constructed and focus on the fundamentals of rhythm, pitch, and reading music. Seventh- and eighth-grade students learn major and minor scales, intervals, chord construction, and progressions. Keyboards are used to apply knowledge of these skills throughout the course, and include basic technique for learning piano at all levels of beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Students learn composition techniques through use of keyboards, Musescore, and handwritten notation.

Digital Music *(Eighth Grade)*

Students explore digital music creation by mixing and remixing their own music using GarageBand and other tools. The class introduces students to music editing and how music and sound affect the film, TV, and Internet and the video games they enjoy on a daily basis. Students also form a vocabulary and skill set focused around musical genres, including hip-hop, pop, and electronic music.

Theatre Arts *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

In sixth grade, students revisit the building blocks of acting skills and take a deeper dive into meaning and application. Additionally, the course focuses on elements of vocal production and articulation. Students explore the methodology of Stanislavski, specifically in regard to objectives, actions, and obstacles. Classroom performance projects are commercials; fractured fairy tales; character interviews; open-ended scenes; and, when time permits, pantomime.

In seventh grade, students review the building blocks of acting skills and explore how application supports the craft. They also review vocabulary and methodology of "The Method" and Stanislavski. During class activities, students perform and come to understand performance through multiple approaches, including those of Uta Hagen, Stanford Meisner, Viewpoints, and Frantic Assembly. The trimester ends with an original, devised theatre piece entitled "I Am From" where students examine their heritage and past life experiences to create an individual, original poem supported by and in collaboration with classmates.

In eighth grade, students review the building blocks of acting skills and how their application supports the craft. They briefly review the methodologies learned in sixth and seventh grades. The course focuses heavily on improvisation and devised theatre, and the final project includes script writing. Class performance pieces are created around identity, belief, and belonging. The written piece is inspired by a selected piece of artwork.

Upper House students can also participate in a play at each grade level. The sixth-grade play is open to any interested student in sixth grade as an after-school activity in the winter season. The seventh-grade Shakespeare production is part of the English curriculum and also relates to the study of the Renaissance Period in social studies/history. Students are invited to be involved in many aspects of the play—both backstage and onstage. Participants in the seventh-grade play enroll in Theatre Arts as their trimester-long arts course in the spring. The eighth-grade play involves a select group of students in eighth grade who are enrolled in Performance Ensemble and work as cast and crew members to produce the show as part of their fine and performing arts, trimester-long course in the fall. Plays may be submitted to the Foxy Awards, which recognize excellence among New Jersey schools in areas of performance, direction, design and technical theatre, and outstanding production.

Shakespeare Production *(Seventh Grade by Audition, Spring)*

During the spring trimester, Theatre Arts becomes the Shakespeare Production class for actors cast in the Shakespeare Project. This year's production will be *Romeo and Juliet.*

Performance Ensemble *(Eighth Grade by Audition, Fall)*

This year, the Ensemble performs Steven Dietz's *Still Life with Iris*, a fantastical adventure which centers on a little girl's search for the simplest of things: home.

UPPER HOUSE YEARLONG COURSES (*Sixth- and seventh-grade yearlong courses meet 2.5 times per cycle. Eighth-grade yearlong courses meet 2 times per cycle during the first and third trimesters, and 5 times per cycle during the second trimester.*)

In addition to the yearlong classes below, students in sixth through eighth grade are eligible to participate in the select groups of Jazz Band and Chamber Singers, which meet during Academic Engagement time and are open by audition to those at an advanced level. Select Strings meets regularly and is open by audition to advanced strings players in all Middle School grades. Members of the select and yearlong music performance groups may travel to and participate in the Music in the Parks Festival in May.

The Studio Art Program, the Jazz Band, the Strings Program, and the Dance Program also have winter and/or spring performances or shows that represent the combined efforts of Middle and Upper School students. These collaborations provide Middle School students with the opportunity to work with Upper School mentors and role models as they experience the kinds of opportunities that lie ahead for them.

Studio Art *(Seventh and Eighth Grades)*

This course goes beyond the general art curriculum to develop students' drawing, sculpture, installation, and painting skills through a variety of media and techniques. Students explore great artists and significant movements of the past and collaborate to create works based upon these influences. The artists studied include: Albrecht Dürer, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, M.C. Escher, Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, and Kara Walker. Students must submit an art portfolio with three to five pieces of work to be considered for participation in this class.

Rhythm and Dance *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

Rhythm and counting are crucial parts of every dancer's life. Students learn various, characteristic rhythms through a diverse selection of music, including classical, jazz, folk, progressive, alternative, Afro-Caribbean, and swing. The class also explores the dance genres of ballet, modern, tap, lyrical, modern, ballroom, and hip-hop. Students concentrate on specific performance skills using a range of dance techniques and engage in an in-depth study of the process of creative expression through choreography. When creating their own dance combinations, they identify and use the musical rhythms and dance genres studied. Students develop original choreography projects and have opportunities to perform throughout the year.

Chorus *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

Students continue to build their musicianship through performance of a varied, choral music repertoire that includes two-through-four-part harmonies. Beginning in sixth grade and continuing through eighth grade, students learn and practice ear training skills to enable them to read and sing basic music passages by sight with pitch identification and accuracy.

Concert Band *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

Students continue to build on the basics of instrumental and ensemble playing skills established in fourth and fifth grades. They explore more complex rhythms, advance their skills on their individual instruments, and perform more intricate ensemble music. Multiple grades combine forces for an enhanced performance experience. After the spring performances, all Concert Band students explore alternate forms of composition, work on sight-reading skills, and learn basic music theory.

Strings *(Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades)*

Violinists, violists, and cellists study traditional classical music for string instruments by Vivaldi, Bach, and other classical composers. They further their skills by playing various genres of music arranged for strings ensembles that span from traditional to contemporary. For an enhanced performance experience, the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades combine forces as one Strings Ensemble for performances.

Film Production *(Seventh and Eighth Grades)*

Students work collaboratively to make films by writing screenplays, creating storyboards, composing camera angles, animating with different mediums, acting with continuity, learning how to film scenes, and polishing their final videos in the editing process. They practice these skills using iMovie; Adobe Premiere Pro; and iStopMotion, an iPad app for creating stop-motion films. Students also study professional films and develop an understanding of how to communicate a vision to an audience.

HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The Middle School health and wellness curriculum helps students to make healthy lifestyle choices by teaching them to apply strategies that can contribute to a positive wellness journey. Students engage in experiential learning and receive developmentally appropriate information through the lens of our seven dimensions of wellness: mental, emotional, social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental. Students practice skills that empower them to better understand the world around them and enhance their sense of belonging as they learn how to negotiate different aspects of daily life, including decision-making, emotional regulation, and self-control.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education is a fundamental and crucial part of the Middle School experience. Classes are intentionally designed to be less competitive and more experience- and fitness-based, with an emphasis on learning new skills through traditional and nontraditional units. This model helps students set goals at their own pace without constantly comparing themselves to others.

Our curriculum builds in intensity and complexity from fourth to eighth grade. Each year, students are asked to use a set of skills learned the previous year to help them understand a new sport or concept to complete a personal best. A strong focus on sportsmanship and a growth mindset helps students to become lifelong learners of physical movements, which impact lifetime fitness. Students entering the Middle School start with physical units that connect with their third-grade Capstone Project focus on community and teamwork. Team-building games, fitness drumming, skateboarding, and brain games are just a few highlights. Students learn games from cultures around the world like Omnikin ball and begin to explore new ways to enhance their fitness with units like parkour, spin class, hand-eye coordination, yard games, netball, golf, and track and field. Students do experience more traditional units like basketball, baseball, and tennis; and each year, students are asked to participate in some of the same activities at a higher level. All units offer connections to concepts learned in wellness classes, such as decision-making, dealing with adversity, and setting goals. Physical education at the Middle School culminates with classes designed in preparation for the Upper School where students primarily focus on concepts of physical fitness in creating workouts in a weight room, incorporating recovery, and maintaining physical routines and habits.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Fourth Grade: Wellness

Fourth-grade wellness class provides a foundation for personal growth and education about the skills needed to maintain and achieve a healthy lifestyle. Our holistic approach emphasizes concepts that help students make connections between who they are, what they feel, and the world around them. Wellness is a full-year class that builds from our seven "pizza slices" of wellness: mental awareness, emotional wellness, social wellness, physical wellness, intellectual wellness, spiritual wellness, and environmental wellness. Each class is designed to educate students about the skills, healthy habits, and strategies that can be used to navigate through and build self-awareness. Students use an unlined notebook to express their thoughts, ask questions, and take notes; and it becomes a guide for them during the year. Students interact with a variety of resources, such as books, games, mindful walks, and music, to solidify their experience with each "pizza slice." By the end of the year, students should have an understanding of what wellness looks like to them and how to process future health and wellness lessons and topics.

Fifth Grade: Growth, Change, and Identity

Health and wellness class focuses on identity and self-awareness, as well as the physical, social, and emotional stages of development during puberty. Students build upon vocabulary and concepts that were taught in fourth grade. They work on implementing strategies and techniques to strengthen their self-confidence and self-worth, allowing them to be appropriately aware of puberty and physical changes,

uphold personal values, and handle peer pressure. This course relies on a strong partnership between home and school. Teachers send home an outline at the beginning of the course, and parents are encouraged to discuss class topics with their children at home. Special games, projects, and discussions of current events further strengthen how the students see themselves and how they relate to the world around them.

Sixth Grade: Decision-Making, Everyday Consent, Concepts of Self, Social Media, and Emotional Literacy

Through the different layers of wellness, students learn how stress, positive and negative mindsets, and changing emotions affect their well-being. They also learn strategies and concepts that can help them with self-regulation and with applying these techniques to personal experiences. Students begin to learn about creating boundaries and using language that can help promote advocacy and empowerment. At this level, students begin to understand what "everyday consent" is as it relates to personal items, personal space, and bullying. They also spend time exploring some of the different concepts of self as they learn vocabulary and review the importance of having strong self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-care, to name a few. Students explore The Social Institute's online platorm, #WinAtSocial, which offers automated content delivery in language that is relevant and recognizable to middle school students in today's culture, so they can make connections between what they are learning and the world of social media.

Seventh Grade: Stress, Problem Solving, Factors That Influence Risky Behavior, and Substances

Students build upon the lessons and skills taught in the previous year to help them have a deeper understanding of where stress comes from, how it builds and how to stop the "domino effect" of events. Students begin to understand the roots of stress and how to maintain low levels of stress by redirecting negative stress. They learn techniques and concepts that can have an impact immediately. Seventh-grade students also begin the complex thinking associated with making their wellness wheel serve them in problem solving. By now, students know what the different dimensions of the wellness wheel are, and they begin to see how to problem-solve in those same dimensions. Once again, students interact with the #WinAtSocial platform to aid in their understanding of these concepts in a digital age. Students also begin to learn about factors that contribute to risky behavior and how they can implement strategies to stay in control. Much of the focus is designed to examine some of the hurdles of adolescent thinking and behavior while also helping students seek alternative solutions to unhealthy situations. Students discuss the nature of addiction and the consequences of substance abuse; they define the term "drug" and learn about the physical, psychological, and social effects of drug use. Other important issues that students discuss include decision-making, peer pressure, and how to self-advocate and ask for help.

Eighth Grade: Creating Healthy Relationships in Dating, Human Reproduction and Contraception, and Gender and Sexuality

Students in eighth grade return to topics about the physical, social, and emotional changes that occur during puberty from the perspective of an older student about to enter high school. Students also engage in discussions and research around dating, healthy relationships vs. unhealthy relationships, consent, and gender. As students prepare to go into high school, we revisit what identity means and how it is expressed in an affirming atmosphere. Students also focus on understanding the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive systems, fetal development and birth, sexually transmitted diseases, and abstinence and other contraceptives. Through ongoing, small-group discussions, students gain insight into and develop an understanding of the human body, the many unique qualities it has, and how to protect it.

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B.A., Kenyon College

Peter Gaynor
Coordinator of Restorative Practices /
Social Studies / English
B.A., Union College
M.Ed., University of Massachusetts,
Amherst

Diane Giangreco
Fine and Performing Arts (Technical
Theatre) / Technical Theatre Director
B.A., Georgetown University

Maria Gilmartin
Fine and Performing Arts (Music) /
Department Chair
B.M., William Paterson University
M.A., Montclair State University

Deborah Gordon
Mathematics / Department Chair
B.S., Brandeis University
M.A., Teachers College,
Columbia University

Chelsea Goss
Social Studies
B.A., M.A., Rutgers University

Lisa Gunn-Becker
Fine and Performing Arts
(Theatre)
B.A., California State
University Fresno
M.F.A., Temple University

Dimitri Hadjipetkov
Fine and Performing Arts
(Strings)
B.A., Montclair State University
M.A., New York University

MIDDLE SCHOOL FACULTY

Susan Hansen
Science
B.S., Eastern Michigan University
M.A., Teachers College,
Columbia University

Shanie Israel
Dean of Community Life /
Sixth Grade Dean
B.S., M.Ed., Ohio University

Daniella Kessler
Director of Counseling, Office of
Student Support / Counselor
B.A., M.A., University of Nevada,
Las Vegas

Marsha Kleinman
English
B.A., SUNY Binghamton
M.A., Teachers College,
Columbia University

Amanda Langan
World Language / Department Chair
B.A., SUNY Geneseo

Kara Leftwich
Learning Specialist, Grades 4–5
B.A.S.W., University of New Hampshire
MS.Ed., Hunter College

Nathan Lutz
World Language / Fifth Grade Dean
B.A., Louisiana State University
Diplôme, La Sorbonne
M.A., Rutgers University
M.Ed., SUNY Empire State College

Beau Macksoud
World Language
B.A., Bard College
M.A., Middlebury College
M.Ed., Northeastern University

Justine Martinez
Science
B.A., M.Ed., Drew University

Christopher McLaughlin
Director of STEM+ Programming
(Junior Kindergarten–8)
B.F.A., University of Southern
Mississippi
M.A.T., Montclair State University

Carolyn Metz
Counselor / Health, Wellness, and
Physical Education
B.S., New York University
M.S., St. John's University

Ruth Miller
English / Department Chair
B.A., Trinity College
M.A., M.Litt., Middlebury College

Sunnie Minn
Science
B.S., M.S., SUNY Stony Brook

Paul Murphy
Fine and Performing Arts
(Concert Band)
B.M., St. Olaf College
M.M., Yale School of Music

Meghan Murray
Librarian
B.A., William Paterson University
M.L.I.S., Drexel University

Huma Niazi
Science
B.S., B.Ed, Jamia University
M.Ed., University of Delhi

Andrew Ongchin
Fourth Grade (Interim)
B.A., New York University
M.A., Columbia University

Spencer Pyke
Health, Wellness, and
Physical Education / Eighth Grade Dean
B.A., Lynchburg College
M.S., Montclair State University

Yesenia Ravelo-Rodriguez
World Language
B.A., The College of New Jersey
M.A., Marygrove College

Tom Ruddy
Librarian
B.A., M.L.I.S., Rutgers University

Leon Shade '98
Health, Wellness, and Physical
Education / Department Chair
B.A., Rutgers University

Roshni Shah
Fourth Grade (on leave Fall 2026)
B.S., M.S., Drexel University
Ed.D., Northeastern University

Kristen Sigler
Mathematics
B.A., M.A., University of Pittsburgh

Sheila Smith
Fourth Grade / Middle School
Community Engagement Coordinator
B.A., Roanoke College

Anisha Thaker
Science
B.S., M.S., University of Massachusetts,
Amherst
M.S. Hunter College

Amy Mai Tierney
Social Studies
B.A., Swarthmore College
M.A.T., Teachers College,
Columbia University

Nicholas Tricarico
English
B.A., Rutgers University
M.A., New Jersey City University

Mojda Walker
Fourth Grade
B.A., Alfred University
M.S., Pace University

Daniel Weller '01
Science / Department Chair
B.A., New York University
M.A.T., Montclair State University
Ed.S., Seton Hall University

Denis Wong
English
B.A., Rutgers University
M.S., Long Island University
M.F.A., The City University of
Hong Kong

Fangzhou Zhang
World Language
B.A., Northeast Normal University
M.A., Seton Hall University

LOWER HOUSE DAILY SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

Time	A Day	B Day	C Day	D Day	E Day	F Day	G Day	H Day
7:50 - 8:00 a.m.	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
8:00 - 8:55 a.m.								
8:55 - 9:50 a.m.								
9:50 - 10:10 a.m.	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
10:10 - 10:40 a.m.	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement
10:40 - 11:35 a.m.								
11:35 a.m. - 12:20 p.m.	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
12:20 - 1:15 p.m.								
1:15 - 2:00 p.m.								
2:00 - 2:10 p.m.	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
2:10 - 2:50 p.m. *(M-F rotation)*	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close

Academic Subjects: Language Arts: Reading and Writing Workshop; Social Studies; Mathematics; Science; World Language; Fine and Performing Arts; Health, Wellness, and Physical Education; Library; Tech Bytes

UPPER HOUSE DAILY SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

Time	A Day	B Day	C Day	D Day	E Day	F Day	G Day	H Day
7:50 - 8:00 a.m.	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
8:00 - 8:55 a.m.								
8:55 - 9:50 a.m.								
9:50 - 10:10 a.m.	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
10:10 - 10:40 a.m.	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement	Academic Engagement
10:40 - 11:35 a.m.								
11:35 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.								
12:30 - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
1:15 - 2:10 p.m.								
2:10 - 2:50 p.m. *(M-F rotation)*	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close	Community Close

Academic Subjects: English; Social Studies/History; Mathematics; Science; World Language; Fine and Performing Arts; Health, Wellness, and Physical Education