



Rocky Hill School

2016-17 COURSE OF STUDY

The Middle School

GRADE SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

Required for all students.

GRADE 6 & 7

LIBRARY AND TECHNOLOGY SKILLS

The Library and Technology Skills classes help students to learn information literacy skills and to employ technology as an effective tool for lifelong learning. The classes not only teach the mechanics of using technology, but also the ethical, cultural, and societal issues related to the use of this technology and information. Instruction is integrated into all curriculum areas, consequently grading is assigned to the appropriate academic course. Specific technology topics covered include use of the Moodle™ management system, use of Google™ accounts, and internet safety. Technology instruction is based on the International Society for Technology in Education National Education Technology Standards. Information literacy skills are based on the AASL Standards for the 21st Century.

GRADE 8

EXPOSITIONS

During his or her final year in the Middle School, each eighth- grade student delivers a multimedia presentation to the entire Middle School community. The students select a topic for their exposition at the start of the school year. They conduct research, which must include an interview with someone directly related to their topic, write an expository paper, develop their multimedia presentations throughout the fall, and rehearse their expositions in front of the faculty. They are instructed in effective research techniques, the proper way to conduct an interview, PowerPoint design, and public speaking. Exposition presentations take place in January and February. Previous themes have included Rhode Island, Natural Phenomena and Environmental Issues, Decades, and People Who Have Made a Difference.

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS: Grades 6-8

STUDIO ART

All Middle School students have Studio Art two times a week. Students will advance their foundational drawing techniques, strategies for design, and color theory comprehension in this graded course. Students develop problem solving skills and conceptual thinking by working with a variety of materials, from paint to clay, as they apply the elements and principles of art and design. Projects stem from exposure to art history and contemporary art, multicultural perspectives, and interdisciplinary connections. Documenting the creative process, digital portfolios, visual references, and student-driven presentations are some of the ways the Ipad is used by the Middle School students in art.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Instrumental music is a graded elective course open to all sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. Prior experience on a wind instrument in fifth grade is desirable, but not necessary. Sixth-grade students work primarily in a class method book, and seventh- and eighth-grade students focus more on music for performance, supported by exercises in musicianship, stressing tone, intonation, and scale technique development. The Middle School Band performs a Winter and a Spring Concert. The music performed is appropriate to difficulty level and programming is drawn from serious concert band literature and lighter jazz and pop repertoire. Students are prepared for and encouraged to further their instrumental development in the Upper School Band.

CHOIR: WAVE

The Middle School choir, Wave, meets three times per week for the year as a graded, elective course. Choir students learn to use their instrument to create a correct and pleasing singing sound. In addition to learning proper vocal production and technique, students learn music reading skills, sight- singing skills, and performance skills. Chorus also offers opportunities for students to develop team building and leadership skills. This is a performance-based class. Participation in concert performances outside of regular class hours is required. During weekly sectional and full chorus rehearsals, singers are asked to concentrate on greater refinement of previously acquired choral skills. These skills include diction, articulation, dynamics, octavo reading and producing a beautiful tone. Emphasis on part-singing and sight-reading are also part of this class. A variety of literature in multiple languages and styles are chosen at the conductor's discretion, commensurate with the group's ability.

ENGLISH

GRADE 6 – ENGLISH

The theme of English 6 is the hero. Students read about and study heroes both from the ancient civilizations that are the subject of their history course, and from the modern world in novels, poetry, and short stories. Students are encouraged to

identify and appreciate the heroic qualities within themselves and their contemporaries. While reading a variety of adaptations of classic tales and selections from contemporary writers, they are asked to identify plot, analyze character, recognize theme, and develop their interpretive skills. Students are introduced to the elements of the writing process, with the goal of expressing their ideas clearly, logically and concisely. The major emphasis of the writing program is on the paragraph (topic sentence, supporting evidence, critical analysis) and the importance of editing and revising. The English Department supports students in the presentation of research projects in the Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

Students study vocabulary and grammar, both in the context of their own reading and writing, as well as through textbook lessons. Their weekly work in *Heroes*, a collection of stories and exercise designed to strengthen their skill in reading non-fiction texts, further supports the theme of the sixth grade year. Students are also required to complete and respond to independent reading beyond the works assigned for class.

GRADE 7 – ENGLISH

The theme of English 7 is self- discovery through storytelling; students read novels, poetry, and short stories that deal with the themes of growing up and belonging and are encouraged to find and tell their own stories. While reading a variety of adaptations of classic tales and selections from contemporary writers, students are asked to identify plot, analyze character and structure, recognize theme, and further develop their interpretive skills.

Students review and practice the elements of the writing process with the goal of expressing their ideas clearly, logically and concisely. The elements of the analytical essay are stressed, as is the importance of editing and revision. The English Department supports students in the presentation of research projects in MLA format.

Students study vocabulary and grammar, both in the context of their own reading and writing as well as through textbook lessons. Their weekly work in *Monsters*, a collection of stories and exercises designed to strengthen their skills in reading nonfiction texts, further supports the development of skills in both reading and writing. Students are also required to complete and respond to independent reading beyond the works assigned for class.

GRADE 8—ENGLISH

This course is an introduction to literary genres (short stories, novels, poetry, and drama) and is meant to provide a foundation for the study of genres in Upper School English 9. While reading a range of selections, both classic and contemporary, from world literature, students are asked to identify plot, analyze character, discuss theme, and further develop their interpretive skills. The structural differences between the different genres and the significance of these differences are stressed.

Students are expected to strengthen and improve writing skills developed in earlier grades, with the goal of being able to express their ideas clearly, logically, and concisely. The elements of the analytical essay (introduction, thesis, body, support, and conclusion) are emphasized, as is the importance of editing and revision. Students also practice personal and fiction writing. Students are required to write at least one research paper (using traditional as well as electronic sources) and present the results in MLA format.

Students study vocabulary and grammar both in the context of their own reading and writing as well as through textbook lessons. They are also required to complete independent reading beyond the works assigned for class.

MODERN AND CLASSICAL LANGUAGE

GRADES 6 & 7: INTRODUCTORY LATIN: PART 1 & 2

This two-year course (Part 1 in Grade Six and Part 2 in Grade Seven) introduces the young student to the wonders of Roman culture, history, geography, mythology, and, of course, language—Latin! By developing a foundation for the structure of Latin, students gain a vastly stronger appreciation for English composition and the influences that Latin had over both the structure of English and the etymologies contained therein. An engaging text, *Ecce Romani*, chronicles the life of a Roman family and is the primary textual foundation for both Parts 1 and 2 of this course. In addition to this text, many supplementary materials, including pictures, videos, and ancient manuscripts regarding all of the aforementioned aspects of Roman life, are examined and discussed. At the end of Introductory Latin (Part 2), students are eligible for induction into the National Latin Honor Society, and all students complete the National Latin Exam (Introductory).

GRADES 6 & 7: INTRODUCTORY SPANISH: PART 1 & 2

This two-year course (Part 1 in Grade Six and Part 2 in Grade Seven) introduces students to Spanish culture, history, geography, mythology, and the fundamentals of the language. By developing a foundation for the structure of Spanish, students prepare for Spanish I, where they listen, speak, read, and write in the target language. Basic communication and comprehension are practiced through oral exercises and writing activities.

GRADES 6 & 7: INTRODUCTORY FRENCH: PART 1

This two-year course (Part 1 in Grade Six and Part 2 in Grade Seven) introduces the young student to French: the language and culture. This class will allow students to progressively acquire a solid knowledge and mastery of the language in preparation for French in the Upper School and the opportunity to take the AP French exam. Language is taught through the analysis of various materials and the incorporation of activities that allow students to listen, speak, read, and write in the

target language. Grammar and vocabulary are taught in an inductive way, enabling students to understand, practice, and master French syntax. Students will have the opportunity to take the Introductory National French Exam (FLES), and will also be able to sit for the first level of the DELF (an international diploma recognizing French proficiency at various levels) by the time they arrive in the Upper School.

GRADES 6: INTRODUCTORY MANDARIN: PART 1

This two-year course (Part 1 in Grade Six and Part 2 in Grade Seven) introduces students to Chinese culture, history, and geography, and the fundamentals of the Mandarin language. By developing a foundation for the structure of Mandarin, students prepare for Mandarin I, where they listen, speak, read, and write in the target language. Basic communication and comprehension are practiced through oral exercises and writing activities.

GRADE 8: LEVEL 1 LANGUAGE – French, Latin, Spanish, Mandarin

To enable students to pursue a 5-year program in a modern or classical language by the end of high school, all Grade 8 students begin Level I in French, Latin, or Spanish, together with their peers in Grade 9, in the Upper School.

FRENCH I

This is the introductory language course for students who have studied little or no French, as well as for those who might previously have experienced difficulty in learning the language. This class introduces the question of identity (as a student, a friend, a family member, a citizen, etc.) through the analysis of various materials that allow students to learn to listen, speak, read, and write in the target language from the beginning. Grammar and vocabulary are taught in an inductive way, allowing students to be involved more fully in understanding the language as they work out different rules, and to increase their motivation. Culture, geographical, and historical facts are interwoven throughout the class. This class is entirely conducted in French.

LATIN I

This is the beginning language course for students who have taken Introductory Latin, who have studied little to no Latin, or for those who might have experienced difficulty in learning the language previously. Latin I formally introduces the fundamental grammatical constructions and the basic vocabulary of the language. Students learn to think about language in a way that English rarely requires. Students learn to treat a Latin sentence as a collection of puzzle pieces that fit together through logical analysis. The textbook presents the fundamental form and structure of the Latin language in a methodical, straightforward manner. Background lectures on the history, art, architecture, culture, and daily life of the Romans are provided to help students understand that Latin was once a living language spoken that contributed so much to English.

SPANISH I

This is the beginning language course for students who have taken Introductory Spanish, who have studied little to no Spanish, or for those who might have experienced difficulty in learning the language previously. While instruction begins in English, Spanish quickly becomes the primary language of communication as the year progresses. Students discuss the cultures of Spain and Latin America to make basic cultural comparisons. Dialogues, reading, writing, and grammar study are presented to students in lively, everyday situations, ranging from simple survival tasks such as introducing themselves to more complex topics such as making travel plans.

MANDARIN I

The first year of Mandarin Chinese is to develop the ability to communicate orally, emphasizing vocabulary development and basic language functions. Students will use the language to exchange information about topics relating to themselves, their families, and leisure activities. Students will learn basic radicals and stroke order in writing and be introduced to Chinese culture.

MATHEMATICS

Below is the standard sequence of mathematics courses in the Middle School. 6th & 7th Grade students with advanced ability and performance in mathematics may be placed in the next level course, based upon teacher recommendation. Advanced 8th Grade students may be placed in the Upper School Honors Geometry course.

GRADE 6 — MATHEMATICS

The year begins with the concepts of decimal and fraction operations, metric measurement, patterns, and number theory. Next, students are introduced to the new concepts of ratio, proportion, percent, and probability, all of which are learned through the study of real-life data. In learning new material, students often discover through investigation as they work cooperatively to understand mathematics. Periodically throughout the course, both geometric and algebraic concepts are presented as students build a base for future mathematics courses.

GRADE 7 — PRE-ALGEBRA

In this course, there are two key goals. The first is to reinforce the skills necessary for beginning algebra students. The second is to use present skills in greater depth and to apply them to new situations. In preparation for Algebra I, students study the order of operations, integer operations, variables, and equations. The early and frequent introduction of variables and equations helps promote the transition from concrete to abstract thought. Analytical thinking is encouraged through the extensive and ongoing interpretation of various graphic representations, such as bar graphs, line graphs, pie charts, and scatter plots. Much of the data studied

throughout the course is student-generated, and many of the activities are done in small, cooperative groups.

GRADE 7 or 8 — ALGEBRA I

This course introduces the fundamental principles of algebra while supporting and developing skills already learned. Students learn to solve and graph linear functions, and investigate the use of exponents and the arithmetic of polynomials, systems, and quadratic equations. A major goal of the course is to build confidence and to show students that mathematics can solve real problems. Students take advantage of manipulative materials and various technologies. They also use probability, data analysis, and inequalities. Word problems are emphasized throughout the course. A student who successfully completes this course is ready for Algebra II in the Upper School.

SCIENCE

GRADE 6 — ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

The Environmental Science course has five objectives. The first is for students to gain firsthand experience in natural settings. Students learn how to use various types of maps in a hands-on study of the Potowomut and Hunt River Watersheds. In addition to the forests and fields, the river system on campus features excellent waterfront access and encompasses a wide spectrum of salt and fresh water communities. Second, students learn about nonnative species in New England and their impact on local animals and plants. Third, each student completes an independent study of one organism or factor in the watershed in depth, and then creates a PowerPoint presentation that exhibits his or her research in an interactive way. Fourth, students examine how local ecological systems compare with rainforest communities around the world. In small groups, students look at human communities living in rain forests and consider how people might reconcile family economics with rain-forest conservation. Finally, students develop an understanding of the estuary by exploring the wonderful marine communities and the ecological food webs that nurture and support them along the shores of Rocky Hill's waterfront campus.

GRADE 7 — EARTH SCIENCE

How was the Earth formed? Why do earthquakes occur? Why does it rain? What makes the ocean blue? These questions and more are explored as the seventh grade surveys Earth's mysteries and its wonderful system of change and renewal. Students work on a variety of individual and group projects during the year as they explore volcanoes, earthquakes, and weather patterns. They research and make oral presentations on topics including atoms, ocean processes, and planets. Earth Science is a hands-on class in which students learn through labs and field trips. The students

use Rocky Hill's extensive rock collection and explore the unique ecology of Jamestown as they learn about rocks and minerals. Our dynamic campus is the perfect setting for study of oceans and erosion. Study of climate and seasons is enhanced by a trip to Nature's Classroom in Charlton, Mass., where the class spends three days learning about the local climate and winter ecology. Earth Science is a year of discovery, which helps students better understand this unique and amazing planet.

GRADE 8— MARINE EXPLORATIONS & INTRODUCTORY PHYSICAL SCIENCE

The 8th grade year in science is a tale of two objectives. Taking advantage of the school's natural marine and estuarine environment during the fall and spring, the focus of the course will be on our salt marsh and in particular the invasive plant species phragmites, which exists in abundance and is encroaching on the native marsh vegetation. The students will map the extent of coverage, look at growth rates and genetic variation of individual plants, and explore the history and threat of this and other invasive species.

The second focus of this course on physical science is an examination of the properties of matter through laboratory experimentation. The course begins by exploring larger concepts of matter such as mass and volume; from there, the focus becomes more and more specific, looking at the characteristic properties of different substances and how these can be used to separate mixtures and identify unknown substances. Student discoveries eventually lead them to an understanding of compounds and elements. Because this is a laboratory course, the majority of learning takes place by performing experiments and, at the same time, teaches proper laboratory skills and techniques. Text: Introductory Physical Science, by Haber-Schaim, Cutting, Kirksey, Pratt Science Curriculum, Inc.

SOCIAL STUDIES

GRADE 6 — ANCIENT HISTORY

This course uses the study of Egypt, Greece, India, China, and Rome to introduce students to the wonders of the ancient world and to help them develop the skills they will need in future social studies courses. In studying these civilizations, emphasis is placed on how each culture built on the achievements of others, while also developing its own unique solutions to the problems all humans face. Topics covered include government, religion, language, social development, art, and architecture. Throughout the year, careful reading, good note taking, and geographic awareness are stressed. Projects help the students improve their research, public speaking, and time management skills.

GRADE 7 — WORLD GEOGRAPHY AND ITS HUMAN IMPACT

In today's changing world, global awareness is an important part of any education. This course concentrates on the skills needed to understand the earth, with a

particular focus on the five themes of geography: location, place, region, movement, and human environment interaction. Students examine charts, graphs, and maps, as well as connect people and their common characteristics, to gain a sense of the world's many regions. Much of the course is Internet-based in order to access more resources. This approach enables students to find up-to-date information on countries, global issues, and world events, with an emphasis on some of the geopolitical "hot spots" that are dominating our lives, such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Many skills are taken away from these studies, including vocabulary development, identification of main ideas, understanding of basic map components, and research for essay writing. At the conclusion of this course, students have a greater understanding of nations and a better knowledge of the world's diversity.

GRADE 8 — GOVERNMENT

This course focuses on the history, development, and functions of the United States government and the significant problems facing the nation today. The course reviews the major ideas and events that led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Students complete the study of the three branches of the federal government along with an investigation of the country's modern political and election process. Throughout the year, the course uses current events to illustrate and further develop the material presented in the texts. Therefore, students must keep abreast of the news, and are quizzed on current issues weekly. During this course, students develop their note taking, summarizing, organizational, and research skills. In addition, students visit the U.S. District Court in Providence.