

SOCIAL STUDIES

Grade 6

The social studies curriculum is a study of the different countries of the Eastern Hemisphere and how people have adjusted to and manipulated certain natural features to their advantage. Course units include geography skills, Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States, Middle East, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Islands of the Pacific. Students focus on characteristics of population, climate, landform, government and culture of the various nations studied. Also included in this course are note-taking and critical thinking skills, which are presented through the research process.

Grade 7

The seventh grade social studies curriculum is a study of the Western Hemisphere covering geography, cultures, history, and how inhabitants interact with their environment. An emphasis is placed upon current events.

Course units include:

- Geography Concepts
- Cultures of the Americas
- Ancient American Civilizations
- The Spanish Conquest of America
- The Colonization of America
- Mexico
- Central America
- The Caribbean
- South America
- Canada

Skills

Students will learn, reinforce, and practice skills in the following areas:

- Geography concepts and skills
- Cultural and historical concepts and vocabulary
- Map identification and interpretation
- Expository writing for essays and tests
- Reading comprehension skills
- Note taking, outlining and summarizing
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Library and research skills
- Written and oral reports

Grade 8

United States History – Through studying the development of the United States between 1500 and 1865, this course aims to help students to understand (1) the events and personalities which have shaped the development of our American way of life; (2) the structure and philosophy of the federal government; and (3) people’s rights and responsibilities in our society. In relating the subject matter to other areas of study and to current local, national and international news, the student is guided in developing critical and responsible thinking. Units covered include American Colonization and Revolution, the U. S. Constitution, Development of Nationalism, Jacksonian Democracy, Western Movement and Manifest Destiny, and the causes of the Civil War.

SCIENCE

Grades 6, 7, and 8

Our middle school science program is based on a framework of scientific inquiry, exploration, and application of learned content. Using state standards as a guide, students across all grades will be expected to conduct hands-on experiments, collect and analyze data, and use correct scientific language in formulating conclusions. Learning will be enhanced by readings, current events, writing, class discussions, proper note-taking, use of technology, and special projects.

LANGUAGE ARTS I AND II (READING AND WRITING)

Grade 6

The Language Arts program, with ten periods of instruction per week, is the primary focus of the curriculum for sixth grade. The principal goal of this program is to develop in each child an appreciation for literature, an enjoyment and love of reading, and the skills necessary for effective written and oral communication of ideas. Written compositions (book reports, letters, research papers, science and social studies reports, and essays) are taught using the writing process (brainstorming, composing, conferring, revising, editing, and polishing for others to read) along with the Six Traits of Good Writing: Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions. In reading fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry, major emphasis is placed on comprehension and literary appreciation, plus a reinforcement of students’ vocabulary and study skills. Students practice speech skills through oral reports, sharing opinions, and participating in discussions, as well as acting in plays and dramatizing stories.

ENGLISH

Grades 7 – 8

The English curriculum is designed to help students develop their basic communication skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Written composition (narratives, descriptions, expository and persuasive essays, and letters), is taught and assessed using the writing process (brainstorming, composing, conferring, revising, editing, and polishing for others to read) and the Six Traits of Good Writing (Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Conventions). Vocabulary is also emphasized across the curriculum.

Students read myths, novels, short stories, plays, and poems in order to enjoy and understand these forms of literature and to reinforce their reading, vocabulary, and thinking skills. They also learn to prepare and deliver oral presentations in the form of book talks, speeches, debates, and panels.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE – FRENCH AND SPANISH

Grade 6

All sixth grade students will have the opportunity to take a full-year introductory course in French or Spanish. This course will emphasize listening, speaking and the acquisition of vocabulary and culture. Topics covered will be related to the students' centers of interest such as personal information, family, sports and holidays. The formal study of grammar will begin in the seventh grade course, although the students will be introduced to grammatical features while progressing in the use of the language. This course is designed to provide a lively introduction to a second language with active participation by students in classroom activities. Students who do not begin a language in grade six may do so in grade seven.

Grade 7

Grade seven students in either of these two foreign language courses will complete the first half of French I or Spanish I. The main goal of the program is communication. The four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught through a variety of techniques. Students also learn about the people and cultures of countries where the language is spoken. Foreign language study is recommended for most students except for those needing additional instruction in reading. This first year of study may be postponed until grades eight or nine, or even later if warranted.

Grade 7 foreign language students must earn a C (73), not C-, or better to continue to grade 8 level of French or Spanish.

Grade 8

Grade eight students in either French or Spanish courses will complete the second half of French I or Spanish I. This course builds on the foundation of the seventh grade level and continues with an emphasis on communication and the development of writing skills in the target language. A grade 8 student who wishes to begin a foreign language can be placed into the beginning Grade 7 level. For those eighth graders just beginning their study of Spanish, there is a special sequence of courses designed so that they can continue their language study at the high school level.

Grade 8 foreign language students must earn a C (73), not C-, or better to continue to the next level in grade 9. For initial placement into Accelerated French II or Accelerated Spanish II, a student will need to have A's in the first and second quarters. The final average grade must be an A- or better in order to qualify for the accelerated level.

MATHEMATICS

Grade 6

The mathematics program in the sixth grade follows up and builds upon concepts and skills learned in previous grades. Emphasis is placed on operations with whole numbers, decimals and fractions. Applications are applied through statistics, percent and measurement. Elements of plane and solid geometry are also explored. Mental math and estimation are simultaneously taught in order to teach students the how to recognize the reasonableness of math. In accordance with the standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, there is significant work with manipulatives, activity based learning, data analysis and problem solving.

Grade 7

This is a traditional middle school transition program geared for the needs of most of our students. This course includes a careful study of arithmetic with attention to both the structures of mathematics and computational skills. Among topics studied are the four basic operations with integers, fractions and decimals with applications to percentage, and other types of word problems. The other various branches of math (i.e. statistics, probability, and geometry) are also explored.

Pre-Algebra

Pre-Algebra is the completion of the transition from arithmetic to algebra. Students explore the four basic operations with negative integers and rational numbers. Students are exposed to irrational numbers as well. There is extensive work with percentage and its practical applications. This course also introduces the student to the basic elements of algebra, such as working with open number sentences and solving multi-step equations through transformation. Geometry (solid and plane), data analysis, statistics and probability are also integral elements of the curriculum.

Algebra

Algebra I can be taken in the Middle School in either 7th grade (double accelerated) or in 8th grade (accelerated). Students must have a B average in pre-algebra. Algebra I, for regular students, is taken in 9th grade at the high school. The prerequisite course for Algebra I is pre-algebra.

Students will use fundamental operations, properties and algebraic transformations to solve equations and inequalities, to problem solve and to solve systems of equations. Students will use the skills acquired in the course to analyze, interpret and formulate a plan to solve word problems. They will also study graphs, factoring, quadratic equations, and data analysis and their applications to real life examples.

MUSIC

Concert Attendance Policy for performing groups

Grades 6, 7, and 8

In order to preserve the integrity of the musical ensemble performances for all of the students involved, concert attendance is mandatory for any student enrolled in Band, Jazz Ensemble, Chorus, Camerata Singers, Orchestra and Select Orchestra courses. In the event of circumstances other than illness or a family emergency, parents must speak with the music teacher about the absence as far in advance of the concert as possible. Attendance at concerts constitutes 10% of the grade for the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

Concert Dress for performing groups

Girls: Dress or skirt (not too short) and blouse or top, shoes. No pants, shorts, spaghetti straps, casual sandals or flip-flops.

Boys: Dress shirt and tie, slacks, shoes and socks. No jeans, shorts, sweatpants, t-shirts, sneakers (athletic shoes) or sandals.

Specifics regarding clothing colors will be given by each director.

Grade 6 – Chorus

This is for students who enjoy singing and performing. Classes will focus on the music to be performed at the concerts and on developing the skills needed to improve students' general musicianship, according to the music curriculum (vocal technique, sight-singing and music theory). The multi-purpose tech lab will be utilized on a limited basis to follow curriculum guidelines for music theory and creating music.

Participation in the Winter and Spring concerts is a requirement of this course and constitutes 10% of the grade for the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

Grade 6 - Instrumental Music

Emphasis will be on small and large group activity and performance, which will include several concerts during the school year.

Grade 6 - Band

For students in grade 6 who play woodwind, brass or percussion instruments. Emphasis will be on learning band literature for performance and individual improvement of instrument skills and musicianship, according to the music curriculum.

Grade 6 - Orchestra

For students in grade 6 who play string instruments. Emphasis will be on learning orchestral literature for performance and individual improvement of instrument skills and musicianship, according to the music curriculum.

Participation in the Winter and Spring Concerts is a requirement of Grade 6 band and orchestra courses and constitutes 10% of the grade for the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

Grade 6 - Music Exploration

This is a general music class for students not in a performing ensemble. Though students will create and perform music for each other in class, there is no public performance aspect to this course. Following the general music curriculum, the sixth grade will use guitars to learn basic music reading skills, chords and basic guitar techniques. The curriculum is not structured for advanced guitar players. The multi-purpose tech lab will be utilized on a limited basis to follow curriculum guidelines for music theory and creating music.

MUSIC COURSES – Grades 7 and 8

Grade 7 – Chorus

Grade 8 – Chorus

This is for students who enjoy singing and performing. Classes will focus on the music to be performed at the concerts and on developing the skills needed to improve students' general musicianship, according to the music curriculum (vocal technique, sight-singing and music theory). The multi-purpose tech lab will be utilized on a limited basis to follow curriculum guidelines for music theory and creating music.

Participation in the Winter and Spring concerts is a requirement of the chorus courses and constitutes 10% of the grade for the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

Grades 7 and 8 – Instrumental Music

Emphasis will be on small and large group instruction and performance which will include several concerts during the school year.

Grade 7- Concert Band

For students in grade 7 who play woodwind, brass or percussion instruments. A continuation of the 6th Grade Band program, where emphasis will be on learning band literature for performance and on individual improvement of instrumental skills and musicianship, according to the music curriculum.

Grade 8- Wind Ensemble

For students in grade 8 who play woodwind, brass or percussion instruments. A continuation of the 7th Grade Band program, where emphasis will be on learning band literature for performance and on individual improvement of instrumental skills and musicianship, according to the music curriculum.

Grade 7 and 8 Orchestra

For students in grades 7 and 8 who play string instruments. A continuation of the 6th Grade orchestral program, emphasis will be on learning orchestral literature for performance and individual improvement of instrument skills and musicianship, according to the music curriculum.

Participation in the Winter and Spring Concerts is a requirement of Grades 7 and 8 band and orchestra courses and constitutes 10% of the grade for the 2nd and 4th marking periods.

Grade 7- Music Exploration

Grade 8- Music Exploration

This is a general music class for students not in a performing ensemble. Though students will create and perform music for each other in class, there is no public performance aspect to this course.

Following the general music curriculum the 7th grade will use the piano keyboard to learn basic music reading skills and basic keyboard techniques. The curriculum is not structured for advanced keyboard players.

The 8th grade will follow the Music Technology curriculum utilizing the software available in the multi-purpose tech lab to create music. Basic keyboard and music reading skills will be further advanced. This curriculum correlates to the high school Music Technology course.

Audition Ensembles

Camerata Singers

This ensemble consists of 7th and 8th grade boys and girls, currently enrolled in chorus, band, or orchestra. Acceptance into this select vocal ensemble is by audition in September. Rehearsals are held prior to school from 7:20-7:55 AM (occasionally through homeroom). Girls rehearse on Tuesdays, boys rehearse on Wednesdays, and the full ensemble rehearses on Thursdays. In addition to the Winter and Spring concerts and 8th Grade promotion Day, Camerata Singers perform throughout the community. Members of Camerata participate in the Western Regional Music Festival. In the past, Camerata has performed at Carousel Music Festivals, the Ct. Music Educators Association Conference, and at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Jazz Ensemble

This ensemble is comprised of 6th, 7th and 8th grade boys and girls who are currently enrolled in band, chorus or orchestra. Due to the advanced level of the music performed and the overwhelming interest in students wishing to perform in this group, all participants are selected through an audition process. Preference will be given to students who are enrolled in band or orchestra with the exception of some of the rhythm section instruments (keyboard, bass and guitar). Auditions are held during the month of September. The entire ensemble rehearses once a week from 7:20 to 8:25 AM. Each section of the ensemble rehearses from 7:20 until homeroom once a week. In addition to the Winter and Spring concerts, the MMS Jazz Ensemble performs at several events throughout the school year. The MMS Jazz Ensemble has performed at the W.C.S.U. Jazz Festival, the New England League of Middle Schools annual conference, Lincoln Center, and Music Carousel Festivals.

Contemporary String Ensemble

This ensemble is comprised of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students who are currently enrolled in orchestra, band or chorus. Students are selected by audition due to the advanced level of the music. This group will play music from many different genres, including rock, pop, jazz, film music, multi-cultural, Irish, etc. This group is comprised of the traditional orchestral instruments with the addition of guitar and drums. Auditions are held during the month of September. The ensemble will meet Tuesdays after school from 2:40-3:40 PM. In addition to the Winter and Spring concerts, this group may perform in the community or for other opportunities that arise.

IDEA PROGRAM

(Interesting Dimensions that Extend Abilities)

The Idea Program provides differentiated instruction for identified intellectually gifted students in grades six, seven, and eight. Children meet twice a week in classes that are scheduled during their lunch periods. Using a seminar approach, discussion, group problem solving and individual projects are among the strategies used to deliver instruction.

Sixth grade Idea's Civilization unit is modeled after the International Future Problem Solving Program. Through a yearlong interdisciplinary unit, a futuristic scenario requires students analyze current, complex societal problems as they develop research, problem solving and communication skills.

Time Continuums is the seventh grade yearlong interdisciplinary theme. Time as an invention of necessity and time as an abstract concept are continually explored through readings, discussions, response writing and small group projects. Topics investigated include: What Is Time? Measuring Space/Time: Is there a beginning? What is the relationship between speed, gravity and time?

Philosophy, Idea's eighth grade yearlong unit, introduces students to the origins of Western culture and the writings of philosophers including Plato, Descartes, Locke, Hume and Machiavelli. Through structured discussions, debates, readings and response writing, the past and present are interwoven as the continuing relevance of philosophic reflections is related to current scientific discoveries and events.

CORE COMPUTER CURRICULUM

Since the inception of the Core Computer Curriculum in the fall of 1997, Middlesex students have taken a required grade-level computer class. This computer sequence was instituted to insure consistent delivery of basic and advanced computer skills which are reinforced and enhanced in their academic disciplines

Introduction to Computers – Grade 6

This first computer course is the sixth grade component of the Core Computer Curriculum. It meets for one semester, two times a week. It is designed to develop computer confidence and fundamental skills in word processing, database, and multimedia presentation. Microsoft Works, an integrated program, is used to teach the database unit. Microsoft Word is used to teach the word processing unit. HyperStudio, a multimedia, interactive program is used to teach the presentation unit.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to develop independent working skills. This is important so that when they complete this class, they are comfortable with their newly acquired computer skills. Therefore they will not hesitate to use them in their other subjects as well.

All students will receive a password after they sign a “User Agreement.” Violations of the conditions in the “User Agreement” are subject to disciplinary action by the administration.

Introduction to Keyboarding - Grade 7

This is the second component in the Core Computer Curriculum, and is required of all seventh graders.

Keyboarding meets five times a week for one quarter. Using self-paced software and teacher-generated worksheets, the teacher’s presentation of the keyboarding skills are reinforced so that students learn to “**touch type**” the alphabetic keys of the keyboard. A brief introduction to the numeric keypad is also covered. One-minute timings are given throughout the course to measure a student’s skill development. Most students leave the course typing at a comfort level of 30 words a minute with no more than one (1) error per minute. Students are encouraged to use their keyboarding skills in their other subjects when writing compositions or reports.

All students will receive a password and will be required to sign a “User Agreement”. Violations of the conditions in the User Agreement” are subject to disciplinary action by the administration.

Introduction to Computer Applications - Grade 8

This is the third and culminating course in the “Core Computer Curriculum.” It is required of all eighth graders. This course meets five times a week for one quarter. The students are introduced to the **Windows 2003** operating system and basic hardware specifications. Using **Word, Excel, and PowerPoint** from **Microsoft Office**, advanced word processing, spreadsheets, and multimedia presentations are developed in this course.

An eighth grade student who is new to Middlesex, and who has not previously taken Keyboarding, will be enrolled in that course instead of in Computer Applications.

All students will receive a password and will be required to sign a “User Agreement”. Violations of the conditions in the “User Agreement” are subject to disciplinary action by the administration.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Grade 6

The physical education program at Middlesex is designed to provide instruction for all students in various activities and to reinforce a positive attitude toward maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle. Skill units are seasonal and include soccer, flag football, team handball, volleyball, basketball, floor hockey, track and field, lacrosse, softball, and a fitness unit. A statewide fitness test is given to all sixth graders and results are forwarded to the Connecticut Department of Education.

All students are required to have a change of clothes for class and to wear sneakers. Appropriate clothes would include shorts or sweatpants, T-shirt, tennis style shirt, or sweatshirt and socks. Locker facilities will be provided and individual showers are available for use. Classes meet twice a week.

A student may be excused from class with a note from his/her parent or guardian for legitimate reasons provided that the note is presented to the school nurse prior to the scheduled class. Any request to be excused for more than two weeks of time requires a written note from the physician. The student will be assigned to a study hall for any excuse lasting more than two weeks.

Grades 7 - 8

The Seventh and Eighth Grade Physical Education Programs are similar in content and approach. All classes are taught on a co-ed basis. Besides the goal of skill development, there is an emphasis placed on the values which physical activity and sport can contribute to the students' daily lives. Skill units include soccer, flag football, volleyball, floor hockey, basketball, lacrosse, team handball, track and field, softball, and a fitness unit. A statewide fitness test is given to all students. Scores of the eighth grade students are forwarded to the Connecticut Department of Education.

Classes meet three times a week. All students are required to change for class and to wear sneakers. Appropriate clothing would include T-shirt, tennis style shirt or sweatshirt, shorts or sweatpants, and socks.

A student may be excused from class with a note from his/her parent or guardian for legitimate reasons provided that a note is presented to the school nurse prior to the scheduled class. Any request to be excused for more than two weeks of time requires a written note from a physician. The student will be assigned to a study hall for any excuse lasting more than two weeks.

FAMILY STUDIES

Grade 7

Family Studies is required of all students in seventh grade. A healthy life choice is the common thread to units of study in this course. The many meanings and types of health serve as the starting point. Information on various classes of abusable substances is introduced, along with decision making and communication skills. Safe and sanitary food handling are introduced as well as nutritious food choices. Laboratory classes allow students to practice reading recipes, measure ingredients properly, and gain experience in preparing a variety of foods.

Grade 8

Family Studies is a quarter course required of all students. Healthy life choices are a common thread, reinforcing ideas introduced in the seventh grade program. Self-esteem and assertive communication skills are emphasized, modeled, and practiced. Information about substance abuse is covered. The family life classes deal with physical growth, basic human reproduction, and sexually transmitted infections. In the foods and nutrition segment, students further develop food handling and preparation skills introduced in the seventh grade program, as well as updated nutrition information.

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Grade 7

Technology Literacy is fast becoming a requisite skill for young adults in today's society. The seventh grade Technology Education program allows students to explore the field of materials processing. Students will design and build projects using wood, metal and plastics. Creative thinking, problem solving, and safe tool use are skills that will be enhanced.

Grade 8

The eighth grade Technology Education program builds on the concepts introduced during the seventh grade year. Design and problem solving are still stressed. Interconnections with Math, Science, Social Studies, and English are introduced.

Design, Manufacturing, Construction, and Transportation are the fields of study that are covered.