

# **MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

## LANGUAGE ARTS/ENGLISH

The middle school Language Arts/English Program focuses on skilled and proficient communication, both written and oral. Language skills are integrated into all areas of the middle school curriculum including mathematics and science; however these classes are specifically dedicated to promoting excellent overall communication skills.

Villa Academy embraces The Six Traits Plus One model of writing, K-8, a model that focuses on six traits of writing competency: 1) Organization and Ideas, 2) Content, 3) Voice, 4) Word Choice, 5) Sentence Fluency, 6) Conventions, and the Skill of Presentation. A process approach to written work is used, providing students with a process that takes them through pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing stages to a final writing sample. Using the Prentice Hall Literature and Writing & Grammar series as a foundation, students enjoy ample opportunities to write for different purposes in a variety of styles: descriptive, expository, narrative, persuasive, comparative and cause/effect. Writing mechanics, grammar and vocabulary building are emphasized throughout the writing process.

Middle school students are expected to develop strong oral presentation skills as a component of being an effective communicator. In all classes the students enjoy opportunities to discuss, describe, and present as individual speakers or in small groups. Through speeches, oral readings, panel presentations, challenges, the students become comfortable with and proficient in speaking publicly. It is expected that students will integrate technology as a support for presentations; knowing how to speak and use multimedia simultaneously and effectively is a focus of the Middle School program.

## LITERATURE/ ENGLISH

The Literature/ English program promotes the development of critical reading and analytical skills. The program affords the students a rich and varied offering of literature including classic and contemporary titles. The faculty provides opportunities for reflection and discussion of the aesthetics and meaning of literature relative to individual and universal themes. Vocabulary development, exposure to different cultures and literary genres, and an opportunity to examine interesting and complex issues and challenges embedded in literature are hallmarks of Villa Academy's Middle School program.

Some of the titles the students read during their Middle School years include, but are not limited to, the following:

<u>The Outsiders</u>	<u>The Slave Dancer</u>	<u>Touching Spirit Bear</u>	<u>Of Mice and Men</u>
<u>The Scarlet Letter</u>	<u>To Kill a Mockingbird</u>	<u>Cry the Beloved Country</u>	<u>Animal Farm</u>
<u>English Words From Latin &amp; Greek Roots</u>		<u>Lord of the Flies</u>	<u>Romeo &amp; Juliet</u>

The Middle School students are also expected to maintain an active program of reading outside the classroom and are given latitude to select books for independent reading from various genres that will be a focus of English class at regular intervals.

## RELIGION

The Religion program in Grades Six to Eight promotes a personal and active faith in God. Each student is encouraged to develop his or her ability to reflect on his/her relationship with self, God, and others. The sanctity and respect of self, based on a student's appreciation of his or her gifts and talents and relationship with family and God, are fundamental to all relationships.

The program offers opportunities for students to learn about the relationship with God and others through the Catholic tradition and Cabrinian spirituality. Personal and communal prayer, liturgical celebrations, retreats, and community service activities provide opportunities for the students to act upon their faith. In addition to class and school wide service opportunities, students are expected to fulfill a minimum of eight hours of community service independently each trimester.

### • **Grade Six Community and Old Testament**

The focus of the Grade Six program is a study of the Old Testament and its themes – revelation and covenant, exodus and delivery, the kingdom of Israel, the Prophets, exile and reconciliation, and God's promises. Through these themes the students learn about Scripture and the Christian tradition, as well as the link between the people of the Old and the New Testament. Discussion centers on the way we choose to live our lives in relation to God and our neighbors.

### • **Grade Seven Community and New Testament**

The Grade Seven program primarily focuses on the New Testament and the life of Jesus Christ. To live as Jesus did as portrayed in New Testament Scripture themes of community, love, hope, justice, courage, reconciliation, and stewardship forms a basis for class discussion and activities. Community service provides opportunities for putting New Testament Gospel values into action.

### • **Grade Eight Service, Ethics, World Religions, and Being Members of the Church**

The Grade Eight Religion program focuses on living our Catholic faith and being members of the larger community. Themes of service, ethics, personal spirituality, and world religions are central to the religion program.

Personal ethics is a topic that comes at an important time in the lives of young adolescents. Each student is developing personal beliefs and values that will guide his or her future attitudes, thinking, and behaviors. Literature is a vehicle for illustrating the importance of ethical behavior. Responsible choices, right vs. wrong, values, and Catholic Social Teaching are discussion topics that animate this unit of study.

Community service, an important component of Villa's program at all grade levels, occupies an even more prominent role in the Grade Eight curriculum. Social justice, the life and dignity of the human person, our call to community and participation, rights and responsibilities, the dignity of work, and care for God's creation are discussed and provide the foundation for student service efforts.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Middle School Social Studies provides a well-rounded approach to understanding our culture and how it interplays with others in a global society. Civics, culture, geography, and history provide the content for the Social Studies program. The program is integrated with other areas of the curriculum – Language Arts, Literature, and Religion – offering rich, broad, and deep opportunities for students to engage in holistic learning experiences. Students are invited and expected to employ their full array of research, technology, critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills with social studies projects.

### • **Grade Six**

This course provides an exciting introduction to elements of ancient cultures and the history of the world. Topics examined include Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Historical eras of focus are the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Age of Revolutions. World, Adventures in Time and Place is the key textual resource for the class with a variety of supplemental resources available to the students such as libraries and the Internet. Students also demonstrate knowledge of historical eras through project based learning activities.

### • **Grade Seven**

Grade Seven Social Studies focuses on helping students develop and apply emergent critical thinking and mapping skills within the study of world geography. Students will develop their knowledge of the five themes of geography to understand how physical, political, economic, and cultural conditions contribute to the uniqueness of countries in the world. The course will challenge students' critical thinking skills as they learn how global events and issues are shaped by physical and human geography. Students will also learn to read maps, charts, graphs, and tables to interpret social and economic information as it pertains to the regions studied. Current events and library research materials will support learning.

Each continent-based unit will culminate in a project of the individual student's choice. These projects are student-directed, teacher-supported independent studies of one (or several) particular areas of human or physical geography. The projects require students to use art, technology, written and oral communication, musical and culinary talent, and acting skills to portray an area of interest. These projects will be presented at the Villa Academy World Fair in June.

### • **Grade Eight**

Grade Eight Social Studies provides a well-rounded, thematic approach to understanding American history and culture and how Americans interplay with other cultures in a global society. The themes that drive the U.S. History content are: government, immigration, industrialization, and civil rights. The U.S. History content serves as the vehicle for continued development of critical skills, including reading, technology, analyzing, researching, writing, presenting, problem solving, and summarizing. Students will investigate a variety of sources, including textbooks, maps, photographs, political cartoons, journals, films, and newspapers.

## MATHEMATICS

The Grade Six to Eight program is designed to provide students with an accelerated course offering in preparation for advanced and Honors classes at the high school level. The central resource of Villa's mathematics program is College Preparatory Mathematics, which provides an excellent transition from Everyday Mathematics to secondary level mathematics classes.

Students are instructionally grouped according to multiple and varied data sources including standardized and WASL test scores, teacher recommendations, and the mathematics background and comfort/confidence level of each student. The design of the schedule, as well as the collaboration of the math teaching team allow for flexible assignments of students between and among math groups. This permits a highly responsive approach to meeting student needs. College Preparatory Mathematics enables the math faculty to move the students through the following scope and sequence:

### • **Foundations for Algebra – Year 1: Grade 6**

This course will prepare the student for future Algebra courses. The course covers the area of number sense, algebra and functions, mathematical reasoning, measurement and Geometry, and statistics and probability with data analysis. The spiral design of the course allows students to review past skills and develop new concepts through logic and mathematical reasoning skills. The problems that students will be exposed to are very much the same as those an adult encounters in every day life. This course is comparable to a standard Pre-Algebra course.

### • **Foundations for Algebra – Year 2: Grades 6 and 7**

This course is a continuation of Foundations 1. Students will review the mathematical skills developed in Foundations 1 and develop a more in-depth understanding of these skills. The student will be required to apply more than one concept to solve many of the problems. By increasing the number of steps required to solve a given problem, the student sees the application of Algebra to the real world.

### • **Algebra 7A**

This course is designed to allow students to start Algebra in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The course will use the CPM Algebra Connects series. The course will cover the first half Algebra 1 over the whole year. The student will progress through the curriculum at a pace that allows them gain a higher level of understanding. The course is also designed to give the student the skills needed to use Algebra to solve real world type problems.

• **Algebra: Grades 7 and 8**

This course offers the student a more formal approach to Algebra. The student will be required to use algebraic reasoning to support their answer to given problems. The course exposes the student to the application of Algebra to other disciplines in mathematics. The spiral approach of the text reviews those skills developed in the Foundations courses and prior work in arithmetic.

• **Algebra: 8A**

This course is designed to allow students to finish the second half of Algebra 1 (7A) during their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.

• **Geometry: Grade 8**

This course develops a formal approach to algebraic reasoning. The student will work with the Properties of Algebra to see how the properties form the logical approach to solving problems.

After the formal approach using Algebra to solve problems, the student will be introduced to the concepts of Geometry. Students will be required to use the definitions, postulates and theorems of Geometry to support their solutions. Students will learn how to write geometric proofs using a variety of methods.

## MATHEMATICS cont.

In addition to the courses that the Middle School students take, there are opportunities beyond the scope of the classroom to further develop math and problem solving skills. An after-school Math Club is open to interested students wishing to devote time to more challenging and in-depth content or to those who want to have additional fun with the subject. Also, Villa students participate in a variety of mathematics contests and competitions in the area.

## SCIENCE

Middle School Science is inquiry-based, seeking to animate the intellectual curiosity of 11-14 year old students about their world and the magic of science. Key science concepts are the vehicles for students to develop inquiry skills. Opportunities abound for students to observe, infer, predict, collect data, communicate, and collaborate with others around interesting science topics.

**Grade Six Science: Human Body, Motion and Forces, Light and Sound, Ecosystems:**

The course will focus on the following topics:

- The systems of the human body – how they work and how to keep them healthy.
- The movement and interactions of matter through an examination of motion, forces and waves.
- The task of producing and sharing a research project on a topic of the student's choice.
- The importance of the scientific process and scientific inquiry skills, such as problem solving, questioning, observing, inferring, predicting, collecting data, communicating and collaborating.
- Research Paper/Project

### **Grade Seven Science: Geology, Landforms, Atmosphere and Weather, Astronomy:**

The course will focus on the following topics:

- The major types of rocks and minerals – how they are formed via the rock cycle.
- Constructive and Destructive forces of planet Earth, including the forces that created the landforms of the Pacific Northwest.
- Layers of atmosphere, and major types of weather and their causes.
- The major components of our solar system – observing the vast distances of space and creating a model of our solar system.

### **Grade Eight Science: Characteristics of Life, Cell theory, Structure and Function, Genetics, Evolution, Classification-Taxonomy:**

The course will focus on the following:

- The 11 characteristics of life, and distinguishing between things that are living, formerly living and non-living;
- The process of examining cells and tissues under the microscope and creating 3 dimensional models of a cell;
- An introduction to genetics;
- The importance of understanding natural selection, and adaptations;
- The levels of classification, developing a classification key.

The Middle School Science Labs are active hubs of hands-on investigations. Common activities include creating models, conducting demonstrations, researching, and discussing. Students learn to conduct the scientific method, take detailed notes, and write lab reports in preparation for college preparatory science programs at the high school level. There are opportunities to use the campus and its natural features as an “outdoor” classroom. Additionally, the students travel to the Museum of Flight to participate in the Space Shuttle Simulation and to Eastern Washington to study the geologic features of Washington State.

## **INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES**

The Middle School International Language program offers students either French or Spanish as their language of choice during their three years in the program. During their three-year course of study the students will complete the equivalent of French I or Spanish I high school international language.

The Middle School International Language program is communication based and designed to help build proficiency, both orally and in writing. An important component of the International Language program is also to introduce students to the culture, history, geography and customs of French and Spanish-speaking countries, and to instill a love of the language and culture. To this end, we use a wide variety of activities and games designed to make learning relevant and fun. We use the most current methodology for teaching a foreign language, and follow the National Foreign Language Standards. We use the natural approach where French and Spanish are primarily spoken in context and while doing meaningful activities.

## **VISUAL ARTS AND MUSIC**

A hallmark of Villa Academy’s mission to educate to fullness of person is a rich program in visual arts and music. We seek to develop within each student a unique capacity to create, perform, and

respond to the world through various art forms based on knowledge and skills that have been nurtured through our academic and student life programs. The arts provide a powerful means to foster a joy of learning. Middle School students enjoy visual arts and music throughout the year. Opportunities for integrated projects between and among various curricular areas provide the students with relevant experiences encompassing a variety of media. Performance-based assessment is ample through finished art pieces and in-class performance pieces that showcase the efforts and accomplishments of our students. Outside of class time, students also have the opportunity to participate in co-curricular activities such as band, choir, strings ensemble, drama, Liturgical choir and Liturgical band.

## **THEATRE**

The theatre program promotes the development of critical reading, interpretive and analytic skills and affords the students a rich offering of classic and contemporary theatric and performance opportunities. The faculty provides opportunity for reflection, discussion and analysis of universal dramatic themes. Vocabulary development, exposure to different cultures and performance genres (i.e., television, movies and literature); assist students in developing a better understanding of complex issues and challenges imbedded in theatre. Focusing on breath, movement, theatre history and the classics, through written, oral and performance demonstrations, theatre skills are integrated into all areas of the middle school humanities curriculum to promote excellent, overall communications skills in our students.

Some of the lessons students are engaged in during the Middle School Theatre Program include, but are not limited to, the following:

The Canterbury Tales  
Television

Shakespearian Farce & Tragedy  
Greek & Roman Theatre

Speech  
Contemporary Plays

Film

The Middle School students are also expected to view and analyze theatrical works outside the classroom and are given latitude to investigate select pieces from which to create their own, independent performances.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Villa Academy's Physical Education program matches the developmental levels of the 11-14 year old learner. The scope and sequence of the program is based on the National Standards for Physical Education. The curriculum includes a balance of skills and concepts in the areas of games, educational gymnastics, and rhythmical activities. Fitness is emphasized as a necessary element of healthy living. Through active participation and a variety of activities, the goal of the program is to promote fitness and fun. The Middle School curriculum is designed with high expectations for the young adolescent's psychomotor, cognitive, and affective learning.

Several examples of the type and variety of activities students actively engage in include Frisbee games, yoga, volleyball, soccer, basketball, floor hockey, softball, and rope jumping. Villa's gym boasts a climbing wall that affords the students opportunity to develop balance, strength and body control. Sportsmanship, self-improvement, individual growth, and teamwork are emphasized. The

campus, soccer field, and climbing wall provide alternative locations to the students for their physical education classes.

## LIBRARY

Middle School students visit the library every two weeks. The goal of the library program is to develop students who value learning and have the skills, strategies and processes to be independent users of information. The library curriculum provides learning opportunities for students to review and develop skills in the following areas:

- Information literacy and the research process
- Literature appreciation and reading for understanding
- Library responsibilities

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a tool to enhance the learning process and is integrated into every content area of the Middle School program. The objectives of the Technology program encompass knowing the characteristics and use of computer hardware, operating systems, and software programs; understanding the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual; and understanding the relevant use of technology in a learning environment.

Middle School students participate in a personal Laptop Program designed to provide each student with his or her own “toolkit” for learning in all classes. The Laptop program promotes individual initiative and creativity while providing for an interactive learning environment that draws upon a student’s skills and knowledge. Students use application software (word processing, presentation, spreadsheet, and web publishing) and simulation (International Language CD-ROMs), research (Internet and CD-ROMs) and technical (web design) tools. Laptops may be purchased through the school and serviced through Villa Academy’s Technology Department.

## ORGANIZATION AND STUDY SKILLS

Villa’s Organization and Study Skills Curriculum is designed to assist our students in the development of the time, material and space management skills that facilitate successful learning. Middle School students participate in a variety of assessments and learning activities that help them identify their individual learning styles and preferences. They are then supported as they translate this self-knowledge into appropriate study strategies and habits. The Organization and Study Skills Curriculum acknowledges what is unique about individual learners and enhances each student’s academic voyage.