

## Fifth Through Eighth Grade

### *Honoring rapid growth and new skills*

Middle school is designed to give students precisely the guidance and support they need to negotiate these years comfortably. That's because a dedicated team of teachers and administrators, who know individual students well, embrace the joys and challenges of working with this age. By focusing on study skills, teachers help students become aware of how they learn, and how they can best manage their time and increasingly complex responsibilities.

While the structure adjusts to encourage deeper inquiry, greater independence and risk-taking, students connect more with the outside community: Visits to the city's historic and cultural sites make concepts of government and culture come alive. Students take their first cumulative exams, participate in co-curricular activities and service projects, and attend their first dances—all within a warm and close community united by Quaker values of integrity, mutual concern, respect and peaceful conflict resolution.

### Class Groupings

#### *Small classes, variety of subjects*

Class size ranges from 16 to 22 students. In fifth grade, students continue to have a home base of one classroom, where a lead teacher teaches students Everyday Math, social studies, and language arts. Students leave their classroom for Spanish, earth science, and conflict resolution, which are taught by separate teachers; specialists teach music, performance, visual art and physical education.

Beginning in sixth grade, students have separate teachers for English, history, mathematics, science, and world languages. Specialists teach music, performance, visual art, and physical education. Seventh and eighth graders sit for final academic exams. All students receive letter grades supplemented by extensive teacher commentary.

## Middle School Curriculum

### English and History

#### The Interdisciplinary Sequence:

##### Grades Eight, Nine and Ten

#### *Comprehensive overview of language and culture*

The Interdisciplinary Sequence (IDS), an innovative and challenging course, traces human culture from 3000 B.C. to the present, while integrating perspectives from history, literature, philosophy, religious thought and the arts.

#### English – Language Arts: Grades Five and Six

##### *Learning the conventions of formal English*

Fifth and sixth graders begin to master writing and literature comprehension skills through Theme, a yearlong study of a world culture or civilization. Theme explores every aspect of cultural arts and history to inform students' written work. Students analyze texts, write research papers and create an original drama and artwork to support their learning.

#### English 7

##### *Advancing literary comprehension and writing skill*

Seventh graders continue to strengthen grammar, note-taking and composition skills by deepening their own writing and reading of literature. By studying basic elements of the novel and poetry, they learn how to apply figurative language and use proper essay structure. They also learn to refine and organize paragraphs while building vocabulary.

#### Writing

##### *Foundations in written communication*

Throughout middle school, students participate in a systematic writing program. They study grammar, punctuation and sentence structure. Students also learn how to edit for clarity, accuracy and purpose as they write critical essays, research papers and creative compositions.

#### History – Social Studies: Grade Six

##### *Dive deep into a world culture*

In this interdisciplinary course, students begin to understand how geography shapes culture and historical events. The class also connects sociology and anthropology with literature, music, drama and art. The curriculum, closely tied to the language arts program, focuses on cultures such as Africa, China or Meso-America.

### American History: Grade Seven

#### *How a nation is born—and grows*

This course explores U.S. history from the pre-colonial period to the end of the Civil War. It combines geography, political science and literature to examine key topics such as immigration. Students research their family history, exploring one family member's experience. These exciting studies culminate in a three-day class trip to New York City.

### Mathematics: Grade Six

#### *Basic mathematics and problem-solving*

The sixth grade math course bridges the University of Chicago Everyday Math program taught in fifth grade and the seventh grade pre-algebra curriculum, and introduces algebraic concepts.

### Pre-Algebra: Grade Seven

#### *The potential and elasticity of numbers*

Seventh grade introduces pre-algebra: Students explore basic number theory, properties of real numbers, equations and word problems, addition and subtraction of polynomials, graphing linear equations and inequalities, and laws of exponents.

### Algebra: Grade Eight

#### *Developing complex mathematical skills*

The algebra sequence continues with the development of complex skills such as problem solving, quadratic functions, trinomials and factoring. Students who successfully complete the two-year algebra program take geometry in ninth grade.

## Science

### *Life sciences and introduction to physics*

Science classes combine content study with significant hands-on experimentation. Sixth graders focus on physical science, including chemistry, electricity and the water cycle. Sixth graders culminate their study of the water cycle with a two-day trip to Cape May, N.J. Seventh graders learn about plant and animal systems in life science. Eighth grade features conceptual physics, which introduces the mathematical structure of physics.

## World Language

### *Understanding language before pursuing one*

Prima Lingua, a world language course, teaches sixth graders the structure and origin of languages. In seventh grade, students choose formal study of Latin, Mandarin Chinese or Spanish as part of a sequential program that may culminate in advanced courses in the upper school.

## Fine Arts

### *Performance, visual arts and music*

All middle schoolers experience performance, visual arts and music each year. As part of music, students may choose to participate and perform in orchestra, dance or percussion ensembles. An annual middle school drama production is open to any student who wishes to participate.

## Physical Education

### *Body, mind and spirit*

Every student takes physical education yearly—which emphasizes health as well as individual and team skill development.

## Middle School Co-Curricular Activities

### *Integral to the middle school experience*

Co-curricular activities may include the literary magazine, main-stage theater, student government, peer tutoring, movie night and more. In grades six through eight, each student is required to participate in at least one season of after-school interscholastic athletics per year, and one club each semester.

### *Girls' Sports*

Fall: field hockey, soccer

Winter: basketball

Spring: softball

### *Boys' Sports*

Fall: soccer

Winter: basketball

Spring: baseball

### *Co-ed Sports*

Fall: cross country

Winter: swimming

Spring: tennis

## Middle School Distinctive Programs

### *What makes middle school memorable*

#### Advisory System

##### *Peer-support structure*

Advisors play a central role in students' lives and are a principal point of contact for parents. Students check in with their advisor at the start of each day and meet weekly in a small group setting. Advisors monitor academic progress, support personal and emotional growth, and lead students through a transition-focused advisory curriculum.

#### Spring Mini-Courses

##### *Faculty-led explorations*

Students spend the two days before spring break in special, faculty-developed seminars that draw on city resources. Each course expands and complements the regular curriculum. Examples include Baseball in Philadelphia, Multi-Media Sculpture in the City, and Metalsmithing.

#### Search

##### *Research that leads to public speaking*

Each year, middle school students prepare a search project incorporating a research paper, visual display and oral presentation. Every student presents his or her work to parents and peers in the Search Symposium. That evening, parents may browse school hallways to review projects, speak with researchers and listen to selected oral reports.

#### Math/Science Symposium

##### *From independent research to Rube Goldberg*

Seventh and eighth graders present mathematics and science independent research projects to parents and classmates. The seventh grade may choose biodiversity or environmental stewardship. The eighth grade physics class competes in the Rube Goldberg Machine Competition, which features student-built complex machines performing simple tasks.

#### Service Learning

##### *Contributing to society—as a necessity*

Service learning, either within the school community or outside, teaches the importance and necessity of making a positive contribution to society. Service is built into the schedule, and days are set aside to perform large-group service projects involving St. John's Hospice, Eliza Shirley House, MANNA and Thomas Mansion at Fairmount Park.

#### Culminating Class Trips

##### *Exciting journeys integrate yearlong learning*

Each grade ends the school year with a trip which reflects that grade's course of study. Fifth graders explore the city of Philadelphia. Sixth graders spend two days at the Jersey Shore documenting the water cycle; seventh graders go to New York City to study American immigrant history; and eighth graders journey to New Mexico to explore ancient civilizations.