

2014 - 2015



Curriculum *in the* Middle Schools

Excellence Without Exception

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What Your Child Will Learn In

**Grade
8**

Dear Families,

It is a pleasure to share our 2014 -2015 *Curriculum in the Middle Schools*, a brief overview of all areas of the Grade 8 West Hartford Curriculum. In this brochure, you will also find descriptions of our Unified Arts program, School Counseling, Library Media Services, and Gifted Programs. Our curriculum is based on the Connecticut Core Standards and provides instruction on the essential skills and understandings necessary for success on both district and state assessments.

Inherent in our curriculum is the belief that every student can and should learn. Instructional strategies that your child will experience include but are not limited to: collaboration, active and direct learning, problem solving, guided discovery, independent activities, and differentiation.

This curriculum comes alive in the hands of our talented teachers who are committed to ensuring that our students reach their highest potential. We are dedicated to accommodating children's diverse needs, the way they learn, their experiences and interests, and to facilitating continuous educational growth. If you should have any questions about your child's curriculum, your classroom teacher is the best source of information.

No single document can fully explain the rich and complex nature of the school curriculum and instructional goals. We know that learning is optimized in a partnership with families, teachers, and schools. Working together, we can use your experiences as a family and our work in the classroom to create a respectful climate of academic success, healthy personal and social development, and joy for lifelong learning.

Sincerely,

Nancy M. DePalma, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

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Curriculum in the Middle Schools

What Your Child
Will Learn In

Grade 8

English Language Arts

Students entering eighth grade will have read literature through many different lenses. They will have explored literature from different time periods, authors' perspectives and writing styles, and evaluated different themes and literary elements. Students will have experience writing narratives, expository essays, as well as persuasive essays over varying time frames for different tasks, purposes, and audiences. Students will apply this prior knowledge as they explore the year's overarching theme of the individual and society.

Eighth grade students will study complex psychological, philosophical, and moral themes in literature and informational texts. While examining different genres, students will analyze passages, dialogue, scenes, or words that are critical to the development of a story, theme, or central idea. Through the critical evaluation of classical and contemporary literature, students will focus their writing and class discussions on how literature helps us define the tension between the needs of the individual and the greater good of society. Students will begin to understand that family, community, and society influence one's decisions and that judging morality is a complex, nuanced undertaking. Students will be encouraged to develop empathy/compassion for the varied forces that shape one's actions. Students will read historical fiction as they explore this theme. An example of this might be reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* and accounts of World War II. They will discuss how authors' perspectives might produce accounts of historical events that differ from what we know happened. In class discussions and literary responses, students will identify figurative language, word choice, voice, and tone. Students will come to class prepared to discuss assigned texts, respond to diverse peer perspectives, ask questions of others, and work collaboratively towards deeper understandings of learned material. Speaking, listening, and language enrichment will remain focal points in the eighth grade language arts curriculum.

In addition, the year will center on three types of writing: narrative, expository, and persuasive. Students will engage in the writing process including the use of graphic organizers, drafting, and peer/self-revision to publish their work. In their literary analysis, research essays, narratives, and oral presentations, students will draw on multiple sources, including literary, informational, and multimedia texts. Furthermore, students will demonstrate the command of formal English appropriate to audience and task. Through all units, students will develop vocabulary strategies, as well as grade appropriate grammar skills, with a focus on understanding new words based on prior knowledge of prefixes, roots, and suffixes. As the year progresses, students will be expected to demonstrate increasing command of English language conventions, including grammar and vocabulary.

By the end of eighth grade, students will have a rich background in literature and literary non-fiction, with a grasp of historical context and many nuances of the works they have read. With this knowledge of the individual's role in the greater society, they will be ready for the rigors of high school.

Mathematics

The Middle School Mathematics Grade 8 Curriculum incorporates the Connecticut Core Standards for Mathematics (CCSS-M). The program goals focus on the following content domains:

- Ratios and proportional relationships
- The number system
- Expressions and equations
- Functions
- Geometry
- Statistics and probability

In all grades, the following mathematical practices are integrated throughout the program:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
- Model with mathematics
- Use appropriate tools strategically
- Attend to precision
- Look for and make use of structure
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning

In grade 8, the major themes include extension of understanding and application of irrational numbers, radicals, integer exponents, and congruence, similarity, Pythagorean Theorem, volume and bivariate data. In addition, the understanding of proportional relationships as they relate to linear equations and the concept of a functional relationship are developed.

Science

In grade 8, science students study and explore the physical sciences — chemistry and physics — through reading, group work, lab activities, classroom discussion, projects, and experimentation. Students engage in the design and implementation of performance tasks focused on specific questions or problems. Our curriculum is based on the National Science Education Standards and the State of Connecticut Grades 6-8 Science Frameworks. The course includes the content and skills to be assessed by the Grade Eight Science CMT including the State's curriculum embedded performance task, "Shipping and Sliding," during which students investigate the effects of different materials on frictional force and the effect of mass or surface area on frictional force. It also includes some physical science concepts that will be assessed by the Grade Ten Science CAPT.

During eighth grade, students will explore the following concepts and skills:

- **Science Experimentation:** Students perform lab experiments and utilize science investigational skills including predicting, observing, measuring, graphing, interpreting, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating.
- **Chemistry:** Atomic structure, the periodic table, types of matter, states of matter, chemical bonding, chemical formulas, chemical equations, types of reactions, acids, bases, and pH.
- **Motion, Force, and Energy:** The study of velocity, forces, gravity, circular motion, friction, potential energy, kinetic energy, work, simple machines, and the design of beam, truss, and suspension bridges.
- **Energy:** The characteristics of heat and temperature, differences between heat and temperature, energy transformations among heat, light, electricity, and motion.

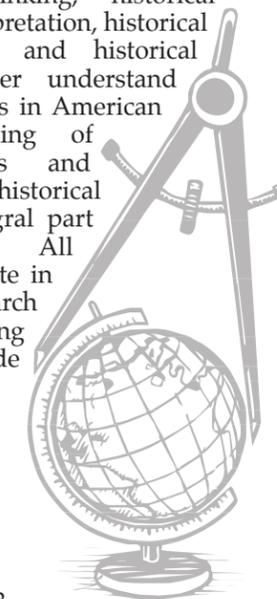
Social Studies

The Social Studies curriculum is based in part on the National History Standards, the National Geography Standards, the Connecticut Social Studies Framework, the 21st Century Social Studies Skills and the use of essential questions to guide historical thinking and inquiry.

In social studies classes, students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of democratic values.
- Cultivate the ability to work together in a multicultural environment.
- Understand similarities and differences within the United States and among the major cultures of the world.
- Apply research skills to the study of history and contemporary society.
- Develop and use a variety of essential social studies and literacy skills.
- Explore local and state history to analyze larger themes of American history.

The eighth grade social studies program introduces students to the study of American history from the era of the Revolutionary War through the settlement of the American west. Students will also study topics in state and local history from the same time period. Students develop and apply the essential social studies skills of chronological thinking, historical analysis and interpretation, historical decision making and historical research to better understand themes and events in American history. Reading of primary sources and supplementary historical fiction is an integral part of this course. All students participate in a guaranteed research experience during the eighth grade year through their social studies class.



Library Media Services

The library media program in the middle school builds on the information and technology literacy skills acquired at the elementary level and supports reading for lifelong learning. Library media specialists work with classroom teachers to integrate these skills with classroom curriculum areas. Students are engaged in inquiry-based projects that focus on the information problem-solving process and critical thinking skills. The Connecticut *Information and Technology Literacy* content standards and the *Big6™ Information Problem-Solving Skills* process provide the framework for instruction. As part of their middle school experience students will:

- Explain what they need to do and find out to complete a task or assignment.
- Apply the research process to solve problems and make decisions.
- Select and narrow or broaden search terms.
- Brainstorm a list of the possible information sources.
- Evaluate the relevancy and reliability of information sources.
- Use the navigational features of sources (e.g., indexes, table of contents, menus, site maps) to locate information.
- Take notes in their own words after reading, viewing, or listening to information sources.
- Cite information sources using the appropriate format.
- Create a product using appropriate information and technology that communicates ideas to others.
- Evaluate the final product by identifying what went well and what to improve in the future.
- Engage in a variety of literature experiences to make connections with text and images (e.g., illustrations, photographs, charts, maps, diagrams).
- Use a variety of strategies to select books at their independent reading level.
- Demonstrate responsible use of library materials.

Unified Arts

Our middle school students participate in 36-day unified arts rotations in the areas of physical education, music, art, health, and technology education in grades 6 through 8. The following pages include descriptions of the curriculum. Below please find a sample student schedule of Unified Arts courses throughout the grade 8 year.

	Morning	Afternoon
Rotation 1	PE	Art
Rotation 2	Health	Music
Rotation 3	Tech Ed	PE
Rotation 4	Art	Health
Rotation 5	Music	Tech Ed

Note: The Unified Arts Program is delivered slightly differently at Bristow Middle School where there are 6 rotations, each lasting for 30 days. The UA curriculum and the courses are identical to the other two middle schools with the only difference being that at Bristow, physical education and health are combined into one course of study called "Wellness." Every student will be in a wellness rotation at any given time throughout the year.

Music

The middle school music curriculum includes classroom instruction for all students in grade 8 and is aligned with State and National Standards to ensure a comprehensive and sequentially appropriate experience. The elective program includes band, orchestra, and choral ensembles. Further extension and enrichment of the curriculum is offered through co-curricular ensembles: jazz band, select string, and vocal ensembles.

Performance Ensembles

Performance ensembles focus on building individual and ensemble skills through a broad selection of music literature. Components include:

Blend	Ear Training	Posture
Bow Control	Expression	Sight Reading
Breathing	Intonation	Tone Quality

Instrumental students also receive small group instruction focusing on individual technique within a specific instrument grouping.

Classroom Instruction

Students, through the use of Music Technology, develop their performance skills on the keyboard, explore compositional styles, apply music theory and notation concepts, and continue their study of composers and their music.

Visual Arts

The middle school curriculum, like that of the elementary and high school levels, encompasses art production, art history, aesthetics and art criticism. All processes and concepts addressed through this program foster visual literacy skills. Students produce works of art that express their personal experiences and reflections about different cultures and artists.

The curriculum is grounded in the State and National Standards to ensure that high expectations for student learning are maintained. Within the curriculum there are required concepts, artists, cultural time periods, vocabulary, techniques, and processes to be mastered by students at each grade level.

Middle school students have the opportunity to experience many art forms such as:

Drawing, painting, printmaking, graphic design, technology applications, textiles, and architecture.

Listed below are artists/cultural artistic periods. Every teacher may add to these with additional artists/cultures.

(Sample assignments appear in italics)

- Georgia O'Keeffe, Alexander Calder; optional: Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec
- *Mobile/stabile creation, expressive portrait, gestural sculptures, observational drawing, perspective painting, collage, 3-dimensional artwork*

World Languages

The World Language Curriculum incorporates the National Standards and the State of Connecticut Frameworks for World Languages. Students may study French or Spanish. Our program goals focus on:

- Communication: to use language in three modes: interpersonal, interpretive and presentational
- Cultures: to understand cultures through products, practices and perspectives of speakers of that language
- Connections: to understand relationships of language to other disciplines and new frontiers
- Comparisons: to develop insight into one's own language and culture as well as those of the new language
- Community: to apply language beyond the classroom in a global setting

In all grades, emphasis is placed on development of oral and written communication skills; links to other disciplines are encouraged.

Grade 8 students look beyond their immediate environment to their own community and the larger world. Students investigate French and Hispanic influences in the U.S. Attention is paid to the development of reading in a cultural context and to writing comprehensible text. Oral communication skills that reflect age-appropriate relevance remain the primary objective.

Upon successful completion of the middle school World Language experience, students earn one high school credit and either one or two years advancement in French or Spanish at the high school level.

Technology and Engineering

STEM: Science → Technology → Engineering → Math

Helping students gain the skills required to succeed in today's challenging world including critical thinking, problem solving and the ability to drive advancements in science and technology

Our program goals seek to promote and develop the following in each student:

- Technological, information and computer literacy
- Creative problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Understanding the impacts of technology
- Experiential and cooperative learning
- Communication skills
- Safe use of modern and traditional equipment including manufacturing tools, electronics and robotics
- STEM career awareness and exploration
- Application of interdisciplinary content and literacy skills.

Focus: Communication and Information Technology

Students are introduced to communication and information technology including the principles of graphic design, the use of computers to create and manipulate messages and digital images, electronic communication, and the evolution, evaluation, and safe and proper use of the Internet. Sample activities include desktop publishing, digital photography, video / audio production, and architectural design. An emphasis is placed on the impact of graphic design on advertising and marketing.

Physical Education

The goals of physical education are for students to develop fitness and skills in the movement areas of dance, adventure education, and sports. An integral part of physical education is the development of the responsible and respectful behaviors in both cooperative and competitive activities. The sequential and varied experiences contribute to the total well-being of each student. Concepts, strategies, rules, sportsmanship, teamwork, and basic movement skills are all woven into the offerings. After-school intramurals provide additional times for students to participate in fitness activities according to their interests.

Eighth grade students will participate in a number of activities that may include the following:

- Adventure Education
- Invasion sports (basketball, lacrosse, soccer, team handball, Ultimate Frisbee)
- Dance
- Fitness
- Net sports (badminton, pickleball, speedminton, tennis, volleyball)
- Softball
- Track and Field

A change in clothing is required for healthy participation. Shorts, t-shirts, sneakers, and warm-up suits for colder weather are appropriate attire.

Support Services

Special Education, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), remedial reading services, and math support are available for students who may need them.

School Counseling

Curriculum:

The school counseling curriculum is the means by which school counselors promote the healthy development and growth of all students. The curriculum provides developmental and sequential lessons and activities in classroom and/or group settings, which support the district's Student Success Plan and address student development in academic, career and personal/social domains.

Domains:

Academic Development includes acquiring skills, attitude and knowledge that contribute to effective learning in school; employing strategies to achieve success in school; and understanding the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community. Academic goals support the premise that all students should meet or exceed the local, state and national goals.

Career Development goals guide the school counseling program to provide the foundation for the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work and from job to job across the life span. Career development goals and competencies ensure that students develop career goals as a result of their participation in a comprehensive plan of career awareness, exploration and preparation activities.

Personal/Social Development goals guide the school counseling program to provide the foundation for personal and social growth as students progress through school and into adulthood. Personal/social development contributes to academic and career success by helping students understand and respect themselves and others, acquire effective interpersonal skills, understand safety and survival skills and develop into contributing members of society.

Individual Student Planning:

Individual Student Planning consists of activities that focus on assisting each student to develop, analyze and evaluate his or her education, career and personal goals and plans. Functions of the counselor in this component include individual advisement, placement and appraisal. The lessons and activities in the school counseling curriculum support individual student planning by teaching the necessary skills for self awareness, goal setting, decision making and career exploration.

Responsive Services:

Responsive Services include the procedures, activities and services of the school counseling program that ensure appropriate and timely response to academic, career and personal/social concerns.

Collaboration:

Collaboration within and outside the school community focuses on services to students through follow-up studies; school and community orientation to the comprehensive school counseling program; leadership to school and district-based committees on student needs and resources; consulting with teachers, school administrators and parents regarding student needs; and collaborative and advocacy efforts within the school and community agencies.

Health

Health education emphasizes students developing healthy lifestyles.

Fundamental to developing healthy lifestyles are opportunities to learn to apply health literacy skills. These skills include decision making, goal setting, effectively communicating, accessing information and resources, analyzing what influences our actions, and advocating a healthy position. These align with National and State Standards.

Students practice these skills using different health contents. The major topics are listed below.

- Wellness, physical fitness
- Steroids, ecstasy / club drugs
- Stress, stress management, suicide prevention
- Healthy relationships, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception

Enrichment – QuEST

The QuEST Program in the middle schools is a continuation of the school-wide Gifted Program that begins at each elementary school in fourth grade. QuEST's student population at the middle schools is comprised of students identified for program participation during their elementary or middle school years. A student who is nominated for QuEST in the middle school is reviewed by the student's team of teachers, the QuEST teacher, and program coordinator before a final determination is made. Middle school students recommended by a content area teacher for independent research, group problem-solving activities, and other QuEST opportunities may also participate.

The program offers a variety of options for challenging the learning of these highly capable students.

- Students may be involved in advanced level investigations within any academic or artistic area of personal interest. In each case, the QuEST teacher facilitates student learning by guiding students' research and product development using higher level thought processes and investigative procedures. The student may spend one, two, or three years researching a topic and developing a project to be presented to appropriate audiences.
- CT History Day, Fox Video, and Community Services Projects are a sampling of additional challenging learning opportunities that may be facilitated by the QuEST teacher. QuEST students or other recommended students elect to participate in these activities.

Middle school QuEST teachers are one resource supporting the social and emotional needs of high ability learners who may, at times, encounter difficulties related to peer relations, underachievement, poor work study habits, perfectionism, over sensitivity, over excitability, asynchronous development, and lack of self-regulation.

Additionally, the QuEST teacher at each middle school serves as a resource person to all content and special area teachers throughout the building. Support may be offered through training teachers in the processes of curriculum differentiation, as well as collaboratively planning differentiated units of study. QuEST teachers may assist in finding speakers or presenters to enrich classroom study, and may serve on a variety of committees supporting middle school programming.

