



BLACK PINE CIRCLE SCHOOL

A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Upper School Curriculum Guide for 2015-16 Table of Contents

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THE BPC UPPER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Black Pine Circle upper school faculty creates ways to engage students in their own learning and in the school's community. Students research their own questions, assess their own writing, and reflect on their own work. Teachers foster student inquiry and the development of voice, engaging students in the creation of a truly welcoming school culture in which students feel safe taking risks and practicing intellectual generosity.

During this dynamic developmental time, young adolescents require a careful balance of challenge and support. Our advisory program allows small groups of students to meet weekly with an advisor, checking in about concerns, reflecting on academic and social progress, and covering social-emotional learning topics. Throughout the school year, students organize dances, write plays, and conduct science experiments. Our eighth grade MasterWorks program allows students time to conceive, plan and carry out a project reflective of their individual interests and passions. We gather as a whole upper school community once a week in town hall to share in performances, we plan outdoor education trips for each grade level, and we do service learning projects at school and out in the world.

Overall, we could not be prouder of the questions our students continue to ask. The richness of their ideas infuses all aspects of upper school life.

SIXTH GRADE COURSES

Sixth graders enter Black Pine Circle School from many different elementary schools, beginning their upper school years in a program carefully designed to meet the needs of early adolescents. We've built many of our courses to be cross-curricular and interdisciplinary, and we intentionally teach Spanish in mixed-ability groupings to demonstrate that in sixth grade each of us has strengths and challenges. These thoughtful choices help foster connections among students and between subject areas. Sixth graders take a whole class trip to the Marin Headlands in the fall, combining team building and natural science education in a wonderful setting. Our sixth grade program supports students as they make their way as independent learners and thinkers.

ENGLISH in Sixth Grade:

In sixth grade, students read, observe, think, discuss, and write about literature in an effort to understand larger themes, to make connections, and to interpret information.

Sixth grade English emphasizes:

- Learning to work together
- Fostering curiosity
- Encouraging the love of literature
- Learning skills that help students read for understanding and meaning
- Asking good questions that engender critical thinking
- Developing and articulating ideas in writing
- Developing a writer's voice
- Learning to self-assess
- Learning to listen, participate, and explore new ideas in Socratic discussions

At the heart of the English program is a dual emphasis on reading and writing: learning to read for comprehension and deeper inference and learning to write correctly, with clarity and meaning. Sixth graders read throughout the year, thinking, observing, and commenting on characters, setting, plot, theme, language, point of view, and the writing style in the novels, poems, and short non-fiction pieces we read in class. This year's novels may include *The Green Glass Sea*, *Weedflower*, *One Crazy Summer*, *Call of the Wild*, *Watership Down*, *Inside the Walls of Troy*, *The Odyssey*, *The Revealers*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Writing is also a major part of the English program. Students write in journals often and explore the tenets of writing through their own practice, through studying other authors, through learning about and using literary devices, and through writing and reading poetry. Students will also learn and practice a simple structure for writing an expository paragraph: one that proposes and supports a thesis using a topic sentence, three or four examples, and a conclusion. Grammar and vocabulary are integrated into the yearlong program.

MATHEMATICS in Sixth Grade:

Mathematics in the adolescent years is characterized by the transition from concrete to abstract thinking. In sixth grade the focus is on making sense of problems, persevering in finding solutions, communicating thinking through symbols, constructing reasonable arguments, giving constructive feedback, using abstract and quantitative reasoning, looking for patterns and structure, and improving precision and accuracy.

Curiosity drives our studies in mathematics. Students explore new topics through the Socratic method of questioning and discovery. We engage students in mathematics by relating skills and concepts to the real world and through integration with other areas of study. Students are encouraged to build meaning and understanding through exploration, and they are given ample time to ask questions. Content is revisited in multiple ways throughout the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, so students have multiple entry points to understanding familiar concepts.

Math Topics and Questions for Exploration

Number and operations: *Why do we use the base ten system? How are fractions, decimals, and percents related to each other? Why do we need negative numbers?* Sixth graders practice computation and estimation as they review the four operations and their relationships with each other. We use hands-on activities and real-world applications to help students solidify their conceptual understanding with fractions, decimals, and percents. In addition to learning the skills of computation, students use manipulatives and visual explorations to discover patterns in numbers and investigate the reasons behind the algorithms we use.

Measurement: *How do we measure the world around us? Why are accurate measurements important?* We explore measurements of length, area, volume, mass, and temperature using the metric system in all science activities. We also investigate the customary system of measurement, precision in measurement, scientific notation, and scale drawings.

Pre-algebra: *How can patterns be represented by functions? Why do we use variables?* The sixth grade mathematics curriculum is designed to aid students in making the transition from elementary mathematics to algebra in seventh and eighth grade. It provides an in-depth presentation of the prerequisite skills, concepts, and problem-solving processes that will help students become comfortable with and successful in algebra.

Data analysis and probability: *How is data collected and organized? What can we interpret from our data? How can we present our data to others?* Students regularly apply skills of data analysis in science experiments and in preparing for the Science Fair.

Geometry: *How do we describe the spatial world around us?* Students investigate circles, triangles, quadrilaterals, lines, and angles. They will explore the relationships between angles and polygons and find area, perimeter, and volume.

Mental math: *When do I need to be able to do math quickly and in my head in the real world?* Students will practice mental math skills for real-life situations like shopping and calculating a tip in a restaurant. Students will have timed assessments in mental math with the goal of improving their speed and accuracy.

Problem solving: *What strategies can we use to solve problems? How can we best explain our solutions to others?* We explore a variety of strategies and approaches to problem solving. Our goal is to promote flexible thinking and creative problem solving. Regular examples of math problems from real life will highlight how mathematics is used every day. Students practice showing their work and explaining their thinking through drawings, written explanations, and step-by-step lists of the mathematical computations used in their solutions.

Assessment

Students are assessed on the following:

Class participation: Students are expected to be actively and constructively engaged in class activities and discussions.

Portfolio: Students keep a record of their work for the semester in a portfolio kept in the classroom. Periodically, students are asked to reflect on their work to look for signs of learning.

Written communication: In math, students need to communicate their ideas through writing. Students respond to a variety of journal topics asking them to explain their thinking on mathematical ideas or problems.

Tests and quizzes: Tests are not a major focus in sixth grade, but small assessments are given frequently to show students how they are doing in a particular skill area. Study skills are incorporated into the curriculum to help students prepare for assessments successfully.

Challenge work and additional practice: We recognize that students in sixth grade are arriving at BPC with different levels of preparedness and are often on a wide spectrum of developmental readiness for some of the topics covered. Some students might need additional practice on topics, while others might be ready for some challenge work. Our curriculum is designed to offer students opportunities to delve deeper into topics, and challenge problems and projects are offered regularly to all students.

Homework: Regular homework will be assigned. Occasionally, students will have an “interactive” assignment designed to help students practice communicating about the skills we are learning. These assignments might be to play a game or share a problem from class with another family member.

SCIENCE in Sixth Grade:

What role does science play in our everyday lives? How do scientists study their surroundings? We base our science learning on observing carefully, questioning, hypothesizing, experimenting, and doing hands-on activities. Students engage their natural curiosity by looking at the world through scientists' lenses and practicing the skills scientists need to explore the world around them.

Science Topics and Questions of Exploration

Geology: *What forces shape the Earth? How does the Earth shape how we live?* Topics in geology will include: the rock cycle, plate tectonics, earthquakes, volcanoes, the water cycle, climate, oceanography, and maps. We focus specifically on the geology of California and the Bay Area.

California ecosystems and geomorphic provinces: *How does the geologic history of California affect how we live? What are the interactions between land, water, air, plants, and animals, and how are humans impacting those relationships?* Students will investigate different regions in California and learn about their unique features.

Energy and Earth's resources: *How do humans harness energy from the Earth? What impacts are humans having on the planet and its resources?* Students will weigh the pros and cons of renewable and nonrenewable energy sources.

Density and heat transfer: *How does density influence our atmosphere and ocean circulation? How do scientists study convection in the Earth's mantle?* These physical science concepts are key to understanding many of Earth's processes, and students will learn about them in hands-on lab activities.

Engineer it!: *How do engineers plan and design structures or machines to fill a specific purpose? What skills do engineers need?* Throughout the year, students face engineering challenges related to our topics of study, such as building a seismically sound building or designing blades for a wind turbine, where they will use their own creativity and problem solving skills.

Gardening: *What is our connection to the land? What are the benefits of caring for the garden and of caring for the planet in general?* All science classes work regularly with the BPC garden specialist, using the BPC garden as an outside laboratory to explore various science topics and themes of stewardship.

Science Fair: All students participate in the BPC Science Fair. The sixth grade works collaboratively on science fair projects, and projects are completed primarily during class time. Topics and themes for the Science Fair are decided later in the year based on topics covered in class.

Sex education: A puberty education specialist visits BPC for one week per year to cover reproductive anatomy and physiology, birth control methods, sexually transmitted diseases, the emotional and psychological aspects of sexuality, dating,

and other issues associated with adolescence. More information on this unit is sent home before it is presented.

Field science program: Sixth graders spend four days and three nights at the NatureBridge Golden Gate campus, located in the Marin Headlands, part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The natural outdoor setting at NatureBridge gives students opportunities to observe and learn about the natural world in a more immediate way than what they experience in the classroom.

Assessment

Students are assessed on the following:

Class participation & collaboration: Students are expected to be actively engaged and work collaboratively with peers in class activities, labs, and discussions.

Portfolio: Students keep a record of their work for the semester in a portfolio kept in the classroom. Periodically, students are asked to reflect on their work to look for signs of learning.

Lab or activity write-ups: As much as possible, discovery is through hands-on activities and observation and experimentation. Lab write-ups will be kept for most experiments, recording observations, procedures, results, and conclusions.

Projects and reports: Projects are evaluated using rubrics to provide students with feedback. Students will often be asked to use rubrics to evaluate their own work.

Tests and quizzes: Tests are not a major focus in sixth grade, but small assessments are given regularly to show students how they are doing in a particular skill area. Study skills are incorporated into the curriculum to help students prepare successfully for assessments.

Homework: Regular homework will be assigned. Assignments may include textbook readings, online research, vocabulary work, finishing lab write-ups, conducting a simple science experiment at home, taking measurements, and visiting a local natural area to gather observations or data.

HISTORY in Sixth Grade:

The most important question for historians is, “What’s going on here?” In sixth grade history we study world history from around 20,000 years ago to around the year 1000 CE. We will try to discover “what’s going on here” with the following topics, among others:

1. The Cave Paintings at Lascaux from 20,000 years ago (Hunter-gatherers)
2. Southwest Asians changing from round to square houses around 8000 years ago (Agricultural Revolution)
3. The Standard of Ur (Mesopotamia)
4. The Parthenon (Ancient Greece)
5. The story of the Buddha (Ancient India)
6. Gladiators (Roman Empire)
7. The Qingming Scroll (Song China)

Our main informational text is *A Little History of the World*, by E.H. Gombrich. For homework, students read books of their own choice. They may read history, historical fiction, biography, or historical graphic novels. Students are expected to read two hours each week. Twice a week they will record their progress, and every four to six weeks they will report on their reading.

Geography is integrated with each unit of history. For reference we use *The National Geographic Student Atlas of the World* and *The Hammond Atlas of World History*. The aim of this course is not to teach history, per se, so much as teach students how to be historians. In order to be historians, they must possess certain skills, so we will practice the following frequently:

- Making timelines
- Asking questions and researching the answers
- Analyzing and interpreting documents and artifacts
- Detecting bias, omission, point of view, etc.
- Writing and speaking well
- Applying wisdom from history to current or potential problems
- Recognizing similarities and differences between and among historical situations
- Reading maps
- Mastering key historical terms
- Telling stories

Socratic Seminar will play a big role as we try to interpret and make meaning of documents, artifacts, and structures. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and asking follow-up questions of each other will help us achieve depth and clarity.

MUSIC in Sixth Grade:

Our goals are to sing and play; to listen and describe; to find joy in making music together; to explore how music is constructed and why it moves us; by reading, writing, performing, moving, composing, arranging, and analyzing music from a variety of genres and time periods. Through vocal performance, composition, movement, and use of the piano keyboard, students develop a sequenced skill set with which to enhance their critical thinking and which will better enable them to explore their responses to music. Musical activities are designed to cultivate collaborative skills, multi-tasking abilities, and to build confidence through healthy risk-taking.

How Music is Constructed: Music Theory / Music Literacy / Music History / Sociology

Students will:

- Decode, sight-sing, play, improvise, compose, and notate musical ideas in standard notation.
- Perform and write straight, dotted, uneven, and syncopated rhythms in various meters.
- Recognize notes on the grand staff using both letter names and sol-fa syllables; translate these notes to the keyboard; explore melodic structure, scales, keys, and expressive Italian terms and symbols.
- Access differentiated online theory exercises, games, and composition projects.
- Further their understanding of how music communicates a culture and gain familiarity with selected composers, compositional forms and timbres, through listening, discussion, and analysis of music from a variety of cultures and time periods.

How Music Moves Us: Performance Practice

Singing: Vocal technique, sight-singing, part songs, descants, and ostinati, with repertoire in a variety of musical styles and genres

Instruments: Electric keyboards, ORFF instruments, body percussion

Movement: Mind-body experiences of musical concepts

Performances: Classes perform choral repertoire for BPC music events including Generations Day, the Winter Concert, and the Spring Concert. Students reflect on their musical performances and their application of expressive techniques for performing music.

Involvement in music schoolwide: Soloists may choose to perform at Solo Day, town halls, or for their classes. Students may also elect to join the orchestra, bands, wii-tunes singing club, or form small ensembles to play or sing at Ensemble Day.

TECHNOLOGY in Sixth Grade:

BPC's sixth grade technology program focuses on three areas of technology: skill development, applications for productivity and presentation, and digital citizenship. We emphasize technology as a tool of, and not a substitute for, effective learning strategies.

Self-guided skill development: This program allows students the chance to take a more self-guided approach to learning new technology skills based on their own interests and skill levels. Technology is constantly changing and developing, and students need to learn to adapt and learn new skills on their own as needed. Some students will continue to practice touch-typing skills with the goal of typing at least 30 words per minute without looking. Other students will choose to explore learning to code. Other students might explore 3D technology applications.

Applications: Students will expand their skills in using cloud-based applications through Google Apps for Education (experimenting with formatting in Docs, learning new formulas and conditional formatting in Spreadsheets, Presentations, Drawing, Forms, etc.) and will be encouraged to explore other free web-based tools.

Digital citizenship: At BPC, we strive to help our students become good "digital citizens" by focusing on topics including digital etiquette, Internet safety, media literacy, and intellectual property rights. Students will develop effective online research strategies and take a careful look at copyright, fair use, and Creative Commons licensing in their own work.

Assessment

Students are assessed on the following:

Class participation & collaboration: Students are expected to be actively engaged and work collaboratively with peers in technology class during group discussions and self-guided work time.

Projects: Projects will be assigned periodically to give students a chance to demonstrate the skills they've learned.

Assessments: Assessments will be given periodically to check students' understanding of specific skills and topics.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES COURSES

As seventh and eighth graders continue their development as critical thinkers and active community members, our program continues to nurture their growth. Students take increased responsibility for their own learning, taking on longer-term projects and greater elements of choice in their work. Our Outdoor Education programming continues with a seventh grade leadership retreat and an eighth grade field science week. We carefully advise students and families about their high school options, and we are always pleased to see BPC graduates attending a wide array of high schools—a testament to the diversity and individuality of BPC students.

ENGLISH in Seventh Grade:

In seventh grade, English students bring the reading and writing skills introduced in sixth grade to a more complex and demanding level.

Students will:

- Practice strategies for observing, interpreting, connecting, questioning, and synthesizing texts
- Learn skills of expression (both verbal and written) that benefit students in all subjects, not just English class
- Become familiar with the process of writing the five-paragraph essay, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing
- Continue to develop their own unique voices through creative writing
- Strengthen oral communication skills through discussions and presentations
- Develop self-awareness about individual strengths and weaknesses and improve in their ability to identify and fix errors in written expression
- Identify, understand, and interpret figurative language
- Recognize intertextual themes and authorial or societal concerns
- Become critical consumers of literary productions
- Consider the ways in which the skills used in critical consumption of texts, when mastered, can be applied outside the realm of literature

Along the way, we explore:

- Elements of a story (parts of a plot, types of characters, differing points of view, etc.)
- Extrinsic factors in interpreting a text, including the life of the author and the historical or social contexts in which the work was created
- Different forms of prose and poetry as well as various genres of fiction
- Formalist analysis, archetypes, the theory of the collective unconscious, psychoanalytic concepts and the ways in which these ideas manifest in cultural productions

The focus for the English curriculum in seventh grade is the idea of the American Dream. We examine how authors, characters, and the students themselves define

the American Dream, and we think about how the American Dream might be different for diverse groups within the United States. Students consider the (im)possibility of achieving the American Dream and question whether the American Dream is uniquely American or if it is an intrinsically human—and therefore universal—aspiration.

Within this theme, the seventh grade curriculum considers group identity, culture, the nation, and the world. Works this year may include speeches and letters by Martin Luther King, Jr.; poems like "The New Colossus," "Saturday's Child," "I, Too, Sing America," and "next to of course god america i;" *The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence*; *The Westing Game*; *American Born Chinese*; *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *West Side Story*; *The Great Gatsby*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*. This list may change, but should give an idea of the scope of the course.

Students write in journals regularly in order to improve their skills in applying writing mechanics, developing voice, expanding ideas, and revising for clarity. The class researches a new vocabulary word almost daily, learning vocabulary with a focus on word roots and etymology. This way, students do not merely memorize words and meanings; instead, they explore the fascinating history of the English language and learn to "unpack" unfamiliar words by using clues within and outside of the word itself. We incorporate grammar exercises into class, encouraging retention by anchoring the lessons both in literature and in writing assignments. Regular Socratic Seminars encourage students to think deeply and critically about texts and to hone their listening and speaking skills while engaging in respectful and intellectually challenging dialogue with their peers. Students have frequent opportunities to work in pairs or groups, learning from each other as well as from the teacher. An interdisciplinary approach encourages students to apply skills learned in English class to other subjects and throughout their lives.

HISTORY in Seventh Grade:

The most important question for historians is, “What’s going on here?” In seventh grade history we study world history from around 1000 years ago to the 1800s. We will try to discover “what’s going on” with the following, among other topics:

1. Middle Ages Europe and Japan
2. The Age of Exploration
3. The Renaissance
4. The French Revolution
5. The Industrial Revolution

Our main informational text is *A Little History of the World*, by E.H. Gombrich. For homework, students read books of their own choice. They may read history, historical fiction, biography, or historical graphic novels. Students are expected to read two hours each week. Twice a week they will record their progress, and every four to six weeks they will report on their reading.

Geography is integrated with each unit of history. For reference we use *The National Geographic Student Atlas of the World* and *The Hammond Atlas of World History*. The aim of this course is not to teach history, per se, so much as teach students how to be historians. In order to be historians, they must possess certain skills, so we will practice the following frequently:

- Making timelines
- Asking questions and researching the answers
- Analyzing and interpreting documents and artifacts
- Detecting bias, omission, point of view, etc.
- Writing and speaking well
- Applying wisdom from history to current or potential problems
- Recognizing similarities and differences between and among historical situations
- Reading maps
- Mastering key historical terms
- Telling stories

Socratic Seminar will play a big role as we try to interpret and make meaning of documents, artifacts, and structures. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and asking follow-up questions of each other will help us achieve depth and clarity.

MATH in Seventh and Eighth Grades:

The Algebra 1 curriculum at BPC provides an important foundation for strengthening every student's math abilities and overall math awareness. The main elements of this foundation in grades seven and eight are algebra, geometry, and applied mathematics.

Studying algebra can help students in many ways. It helps them to organize their thoughts in order to solve mathematical problems that they meet in their everyday lives, and it prepares them to continue their studies in mathematics and science. Whatever they choose to do in the future—from running a business to doing scientific or social research—they will need to use algebra. It will generally strengthen their mental powers by encouraging them to master a complex system of interlocking ideas.

We start with the regular course of algebra in seventh grade. The curriculum includes students' explorations of the main algebraic concepts and processes, so that students can understand the concepts of variable, expression, polynomial, equation, inequality, ratio, proportion, real number and function. Students also develop confidence in solving linear equations and their systems using concrete, informal and formal methods; in doing operations on polynomials and equations; and in applying algebraic methods and slopes to solve a variety of real-world and abstract mathematical problems.

The eighth grade algebra course includes explorations of algebraic concepts such as polynomials; algebraic fractions; linear, quadratic and exponential functions; inequalities and their systems; radicals and quadratic equations; and functions, along with processes related to them. As a result, students are able to represent situations and number patterns with graphs, rules, equations, and inequalities and to investigate the interrelationships of these representations. The developed mathematical apparatus gives students a chance to solve a variety of mathematical, science-based, and real-world problems.

In grades seven and eight, we study the geometry of one, two, and three dimensions as a deductive system in which a few simple statements are assumed and then used to derive more complex ones. The BPC geometry course introduces all of the geometric concepts usually presented in a traditional course in high school geometry, in an investigative and application-oriented format. Students will find out the beauty of geometry as a deductive system and develop an appreciation of geometry as a means of describing the physical world. We will consider, for example, how astronomers have used geometry to measure the distance from the earth to the moon, how artists have used it to develop the theory of perspective, and how chemists have used it to understand the structure of molecules. We will also consider some interesting contributions to the subject that were made by the ancient Greeks (e.g. Euclid, who systematized the ideas that we will study), in India during the Middle Ages, and in Europe during the Renaissance. Finally, we will survey the "non-Euclidean" geometry developed in the 19th century

and see how Einstein used it in his theory of the nature of space. Students will have many opportunities to use their imagination.

Students will:

- Identify, describe, compare, and classify geometric figures
- Visualize and represent geometric figures with special attention to developing spatial sense
- Represent and solve problems using geometric models, properties, and relationships

Since geometry is a logical subject, students need to take time to become thoroughly acquainted with the ideas contained within it. Therefore, in seventh grade, students will explore fundamental ideas: points, lines, segments, planes, angles, parallel lines, and some basic postulates and theorems; they will study congruent and similar triangles, trigonometric ratios and the Pythagorean Theorem; and they will learn about perimeters and areas, surface areas, and volumes. In eighth grade, the study of geometry includes congruency and similarity, quadrilaterals, regular polygons, the right triangles, the circle and its relationships, coordinate geometry, areas, and volumes.

We will use a couple of textbooks as references, including *Merrill Informal Geometry*, Glencoe McGraw-Hill's *California Algebra 1: Concepts, Skills, and Problem Solving*.

Many people, not just students, wonder why mathematics is important. The BPC math curriculum is designed to answer that question through integration, application, and connection. Since mathematics is the key to our understanding of the physical world, we will explore some topics in physics, biology, and chemistry through both science and math labs.

We have explored why and what we are going to study in mathematics class, but the main question is, "How are we going to do this?" "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." The message of this Chinese proverb is that to learn with understanding, students should engage actively with mathematical ideas and materials. Students learn mathematics by doing it. Thus we provide and encourage:

An activity-oriented approach to mathematics learning: We use the Socratic method of asking questions, which leads students to discover a result. Students are encouraged to actively participate, to think, to question, and to seek understanding. As each new concept unfolds, students are given an opportunity to investigate the ideas by using a wide variety of manipulative materials, activities, and projects. Then, through guided discussion, the students are led to a deeper understanding of the ideas and their relations to the overall structure of mathematics. Following the investigation and discussion, students will have sufficient problem-solving practice to develop speed and accuracy.

Careful provision for individual differences: Throughout each topic, students are challenged to do what they can do. To experience individual success, we provide an environment that stresses cooperation and communication rather than competition. For this purpose we combine independent work or small-group work with whole-class discussion. Our goal is to teach students to be independent learners. In this case, skill development is necessary. The topics in each course are arranged according to the level of independence that is required. The early topics can be used to develop skills; the later ones require their use. Students have the opportunity to take part in an additional enrichment program. This program includes Math Accelerated Teams (MATs) for grades seven and eight, the Math Club for grades four, five, and six, and the Math Team for grades six, seven, and eight. In the Math Club we will go beyond the foundation of mathematics to more advanced areas of geometry, algebra, trigonometry, and number theory.

Emphasis on what students should know and be able to do in the field of mathematics: We believe that there are fundamental mathematical concepts that must be understood by each student with sharpness and clarity. When truly understood, they provide powerful tools for extending knowledge. A long-range planning chart of these concepts is given to assist students and their parents in making individual efforts and assignments according to needs, abilities, and time available for each student. The individual assignments can be remedial, regular, or advanced.

Learning strategies and techniques: We use the “most difficult first” strategy or the pretests strategy for highly capable learners, allowing them to work on more challenging activities instead of the grade-level work. We use the “learning contract” strategy for students who are likely to learn the material much faster than their peers. Such students can form Math Accelerated Teams (MATs) to work on tasks at their own pace and challenge level.

Homework: Homework will be assigned four times per week in seventh and eighth grades for further mastery of the material we cover in class. It is due during the next class period unless otherwise specified.

Tests: A test will be given after the completion of each topic or chapter. Tests will be announced in advance. Also, there will be mid-year and end-of-year tests.

Seventh Grade Curriculum:

- Unit A Review of the prerequisite concepts from pre-algebra
- Unit 1 Introduction to algebra: the language and tools of algebra
- Unit 2 Working with real numbers
- Unit 3 Solving linear equations
- Unit 4 Using proportional reasoning
- Unit 5 Graphing relations and functions
- Unit 6 Analyzing linear equations and slopes

Unit 7 Solving systems of linear equations

Unit 8 End-of-year review

Unit 9 Geometry: points, lines, segments, planes, angles, triangles, polygons, perimeters and areas of polygons, parallel and perpendicular lines and their slopes, Pythagorean Theorem, motion geometry-flips, turns and slides, congruent and similar triangles, surface areas and volumes of solids

Textbooks: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, *California Algebra 1* (2008) & *Merrill Informal Geometry*

Eighth Grade Curriculum:

Unit 1 Analyzing linear equations and application to statistics and geometry

Unit 2 Solving systems of linear equations

Unit 3 Solving linear inequalities

Unit 4 Operations with polynomials

Unit 5 Factoring of polynomials

Unit 6 Quadratic and exponential functions

Unit 7 Radical expressions and triangles

Unit 8 Rational expressions and equations

Unit 9 Statistics and probability

Textbooks: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, *California Algebra 1* (2008) & *Merrill Informal Geometry*

RHETORIC AND DEBATE in Seventh Grade:

Course Overview

The Rhetoric and Debate course challenges students to articulate their own ideas and to interact with the ideas of their peers, while examining topics in local and global societies. The curriculum provides students with the opportunity to practice and apply central debate skills. Students will learn how to listen, research, articulate ideas, find their voice, and practice speaking mannerisms. Students will learn and practice these skills to deconstruct and develop their own persuasive arguments with supported evidence.

Homework: The amount of homework depends on the lesson and if we are able to start working on it in class. At times, there will also be optional homework where students can earn extra credit. This highly encouraged, but not required, homework.

Grades: It is expected that students will complete all work, assignments, and projects. With satisfactory attendance, preparation and participation, grades will be determined based on the course's homework, in-class assignments, debate contributions and projects.

ENGLISH in Eighth Grade:

In English, eighth grade students hone the reading and writing skills developed in seventh grade.

Students will:

- Continue practicing strategies of observing, interpreting, connecting, questioning, and synthesizing texts
- Master the process of writing the five-paragraph essay, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing
- Improvise the five-paragraph essay, gaining fluency with in-class essays
- Participate in writing workshops, using peer review to practice giving and receiving constructive criticism
- Learn standard research and citation methods
- Polish oral communication skills through discussion and presentations
- Develop self-awareness about individual strengths and weaknesses and improve means of recognizing and fixing errors in written expression
- Recognize intertextual themes and authorial or societal concerns
- Become critical consumers of literary productions
- Consider the ways in which the skills used in critical consumption of literature, when mastered, can apply to various art forms

Eighth graders journal, blog, and contribute to online discussions regularly in order to improve their skills in developing voice, expanding ideas, and revising for clarity. Students continue learning vocabulary via word roots and etymology, acquiring strategies for approaching unfamiliar words with confidence. Grammar, mechanics, and elements of style will be addressed with students according to their individual needs as well as with the entire class. We encourage retention of these skills by anchoring the lessons both in literature and in writing assignments.

Socratic Seminars are a central feature of the class; in addition to promoting close reading and critical dialogue, seminars encourage students to rely on themselves as competent learners. Critical examination of seminar dynamics will help students develop awareness and skills in social-emotional development.

Students are responsible for contributing to the learning community by taking on rotating roles as blogger, historian, biographer, editor, Socratic Seminar leader, etymologists, etc. This allows for classroom differentiation as well as the opportunity for students to engage their curiosity as well as their personal talents and interests.

We use various critical methods introduced in seventhth grade, including formalism, structuralism, and psychoanalytic theory. In eighth grade, we will learn Marxist, feminist/gender/queer, and ethnic/post-colonialist theories to further understand elements of identity and diversity in the literary works.

This year, the curriculum in eighth grade English is built around justice, revenge, forgiveness, reconciliation, and reparation, using the seventh grade English curriculum theme of the American Dream as a point of departure. Students analyze and criticize the lessons readers and are expected to absorb and apply to their own lives and personal moralities; we will look for connections to issues of social justice in our world today.

The texts we use are always changing, but this list will give an idea of the scope of the course: *Orlando*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," "City on a Hill," "The Lottery," "Shooting an Elephant," "The Veldt," "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," "Harrison Bergeron," "A Modest Proposal," *Macbeth*, *Throne of Blood*, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, *Utopia*, *Animal Farm*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Tempest*, *Brave New World*, *Frankenstein*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Wuthering Heights*.

SCIENCE in Seventh and Eighth Grades:

Approach

Science is not about memorizing “big words.” Science is about being curious, asking questions, gathering and analyzing data, asking testable questions, researching, and making connections between prior knowledge and new discoveries.

The most important goal of science class is to foster students’ curiosity about how the world works. The course emphasizes deep investigations over broad coverage of content. It’s designed to help students develop basic explanations for natural phenomena, and the ability to apply experimental procedures to collect and analyze data. The curriculum allows for the flexibility to explore areas of student inquiry, interest, and current events.

SCIENCE in Seventh Grade:

The seventh grade science course will delve deeply into topics in life science and explore engineering skills and practices.

Classification of Living Things: This unit introduces taxonomy and highlights the evolutionary relationships between all living organisms.

Meet the Microbes: In this unit students explore microscopes and sizes ranging into micro- and nanometers. Students will study various viruses, bacteria, protists, and fungi in the context of how they harm (and help!) human health. This section includes a focus on the immune system and epidemiology.

Cells and Biotechnology: Students will examine different kinds of cells, learn about organelles and cell division, investigate DNA and its role in protein synthesis, and use their newfound knowledge to explore biotechnology. There will be ample opportunity for discussion of ethical concerns

Invertebrate Animals: Focusing on evolutionary patterns, students will explore the various phyla of invertebrate animals as well as the mind-boggling diversity of adaptations such organisms have developed.

STE(A)M Study: Students will explore the design process, principles in engineering, and the basics of physical computing and fabrication, including 3D printing. Each student will be invited to dig deeper into a maker topic of his or her choice through a long-term independent STEAM project. To learn more, please visit bpcsteam.blogspot.com.

Other seventh grade highlights include:

Connection with the Advanced Light Source (ALS) and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab: Students will learn about imaging at the micro- and nanoscale and participate in a simulated proposal process. Student groups with the

lowest-scoring (best) proposals will have the opportunity to conduct their research on the ALS beamlines.

Science Fair: Seventh grade students will develop a project requiring background research in the chosen subject area, to help perform an experiment or engineering challenge. There will be intermediate due dates during the project and the final project will be completed by the date of the Science Fair in February.

SCIENCE in Eighth Grade:

The eighth grade science curriculum is based around the *Introductory Physical Science* (IPS) curriculum by Uri Haber-Schaim. Throughout the curriculum, abstract exploration runs concurrent with practical applications of the chemistry as we study topics such as fermented foods, dissolved gases, paint, fireworks, and more. Student will keep a lab notebook.

Volume and mass: Students improve measurement skills and practice safe lab techniques while comparing physical and chemical change.

Mass changes in closed systems: Students will explore a variety of ways mass is conserved in closed systems, and potentially not conserved in open systems. Students use histograms to analyze pooled class data. Labs testing conservation of mass allow students to focus on experimental design and error analysis.

Characteristic properties: Students will investigate properties, such as boiling point and density, of various substances.

Solubility: Students will study solvents, solutes, and concentrations as they explore the solubility of solids, liquids, and gases.

Separation of mixtures: After learning various separation techniques, such as distillation, students will engage in an open-ended inquiry lovingly called Sludge. They will separate and identify the component parts of their “Sludge.”

Compounds and elements: Students will begin to explore chemical reactions, compounds and elements, and determine how atoms get together to form molecules.

Atomic model of matter and the periodic table: Students will delve into the details of atomic models, learning how their component parts influence bonding and elemental characteristics.

Both seventh and eighth grade science includes a sex education unit. An outside specialist will cover reproductive anatomy and physiology, birth control methods, sexually transmitted diseases and the emotional and psychological aspects of sexuality, dating, and other issues associated with adolescence. More information on this unit will be sent home before it is presented.

HISTORY in Eighth Grade:

Theme: The Constitution as Conversation

As author Linda Monk writes, “Many Americans think of the Constitution as words on paper preserved under glass at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. But the Constitution is also the product of an ongoing conversation among Americans about the meaning of freedom in their daily lives.”

This year, we will use the Constitution and *The Words We Live By* as our grounding texts to frame our conversations about the ever-present tension between individual freedom and social cohesion, democracy and minority rights, national unity and pluralism. We look beyond the dry text to explore the human stories that lie just below the surface. For example, behind the citizenship and treaty clauses, we will find a story of broken promises and a Native American nation forced to walk a treacherous Trail of Tears to deport themselves from their own land. Behind the 14th Amendment and the subsequent decisions interpreting it, we will find the story of a powerful majority reluctantly relinquishing its exclusive privileges little by little. Behind the 2nd Amendment we will find the story of a nation born from armed insurrection and of groups who, perhaps because of the gradual erosion of exclusive privileges, fervently demand a right to own the tools they imagine might be needed.

The ultimate goal of the class is to help the students become deep-thinking, active, skillful citizens. To accomplish that, students will:

- Participate in Socratic Seminars
- Learn various note-taking styles
- Role-play and debate
- Practice extracting main ideas, reading critically, and applying the principles of historiography to primary sources
- Identify new connections between unrelated historical events
- Support arguments with evidence
- Learn to respect opposing (but well-supported) views, and experience others respecting their views (provided, again, that they are well-supported!)

Texts: The U.S. Constitution & *The Words We Live By* by Linda R. Monk

MUSIC in Seventh and Eighth Grades:

Course Description

The goal of music class at Black Pine Circle School is to further develop the music that lives in every student. We will build on the concepts and skills acquired in lower grades as well as differentiate for multiple learning levels. Voice, body percussion, guitar, ukulele, and xylophones will be primary instruments of study. Students will gain real life experience in multiple genres and bring the music out of their heads and into action. We will sing, dance, and make a full body-mind connection with the music.

Course Objectives

- Pursue a theoretical yet soulful connection to music from around the world
- Perform on instruments, alone and with others, in a varied repertoire of music
- Sing, alone and with others, with a varied repertoire of music
- Improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Compose and arrange music within specified guidelines
- Read and notate music
- Listen to, analyze, and describe music
- Evaluate music and music performances
- Understand relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Understand music in relation to history and culture

MUSIC in Seventh Grade:

In the seventh grade, students will focus on music theory, vocal technique, instruments, and performances. Students will be re-introduced to the pedagogy developed by Carl Orff, incorporating song, body rhythm, games, movement, along with student-driven ideas, to expand upon simple music concepts. Students will learn ukulele utilizing a personalized program that uses various songs and texts including but not limited to: *Ukulele in the Classroom* by James Hill and Melanie Doane. Students will create and perform in large and small ensembles, gaining in confidence as well as building social skills.

MUSIC in Eighth Grade:

In eighth grade music class, we will focus on performance and putting music concepts and theory into action. The goal is to get each student involved by using a differentiated method to give each student a voice within the class. We will examine multiple layers of a specific genre and explore its social and cultural implications. Students will implement various genres into instrumental and vocal

performances as well as learn the dances associated with each style. Students will study the guitar utilizing a personalized program as well as various books and texts. We will focus on guitar techniques, chords, singing while playing, single note melodies, and large and small ensemble playing.

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY in Eighth Grade:

In our history of philosophy course we explore the great notions of philosophy from Ancient Greece and the pre-Socratics, through the 20th century and philosophers such as Sartre and Camus. We actively practice critical thinking strategies in a Socratic Seminar format, continually probing for historical accuracy, original ideas, and substantiated conclusions. We also explore techniques of respectfully disagreeing with each other on a regular basis.

The class meets for forty minutes each week. Students are supplied with developmentally appropriate translations of historic texts (e.g. Plato's *Apology*), as well as worksheets developed by the instructor. To support our class discussions we read the *novel Sophie's World*, by Jostein Gaardner, which traces a teenage girl's interaction with great philosophers through history. Other texts used as course reference materials include: *Philosophy for Kids* and *The Examined Life*, both by David White, *Philosophy: A Complete Course in a Book, Founders of Thought*, by Hare, Barnes, and Chadwick, *Introducing Philosophy*, by Dave Robinson and Judy Groves, *A History of Philosophy*, by Frederick Copleston, W.C. Guthrie's *The Greek Philosophers*, *Essays in Philosophy* by R.G. Collingwood and *The Pre-Socratics*, by Edward Hussey.

The central theme of this course can be summed up by Socrates' best-loved quote: "The unexamined life is not worth living."

CURRENT EVENTS in Eighth Grade:

Reading the *New York Times*, front to back daily, was once common practice for students preparing for the SAT, as well as those studying to pass the Foreign Service exam. The vocabulary, the depth, the relevance, and the worldly aspects of the paper enrich and inform the reader. Research supports the use of current events as a teaching tool that builds knowledge, awareness, and basic skills. Furthermore, for many students, reading and analysis of non-fiction material complements the reading of fiction and literature in language arts courses and helps students to expand their range of literary analysis.

In current events, we will examine the week's news, using the *New York Times* and other media (video, internet, and television) as the point of departure. Students will examine headlines to assess the relevant aspects (who, what, where, when why,

how...). We will look at documents to likewise determine who created it, when and where it was created, what it is about, and why it was written. (Much of this will be drawn from a curriculum outlined by the *New York Times*). Students will look at stories to examine the cause and effect of an event, the multiple viewpoints reflected (and not reflected), and the inferences that can be drawn. Observations and lively debate will be a part of class discussion.

VIA CENTER: Weekly Community Service Program in Eighth Grade:

Via Center is a small, non-private school for students with special needs who cannot be accommodated within the special education services of the public school system. The staff/student ratio at Via Center is 1:1.

Every Friday morning beginning at recess, one section of eighth graders gathers at the gate before walking to Via Center located one block away from BPC on 6th Street.

At Via Center the students divide themselves into three or four groups for different activities with the Via Center students. The activities on offer are usually music, art, yoga, and basketball. Some of the Via Center students tend to flow from one group to another. BPC students are encouraged to participate in different groups every week.

Before we go to Via Center and meet the students, Via's Head Teacher Erin Thompson comes to BPC to talk to our students about the center and the students. In the introduction we also discuss how BPC students can stay safe and out of the way if one of the Via students is having a difficult day. Over the years of reviewing eighth grade students' writing, it is clear that participating in this community service program is a very important exposure and experience for our students.

SIXTH, SEVENTH, AND EIGHTH GRADE COURSES

SPANISH in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

The goal of the Spanish program is to give our students the ability and confidence to speak Spanish. We work on the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As the course progresses, there is increasing emphasis on oral communication. Students are expected to actively engage in our group conversations. During the year, students make oral presentations, write their own dialogues, invent games, plan the downtown areas of fictitious cities, and participate in role-plays, interviews, and more. Writing reports about Spanish-speaking countries will give students knowledge about those countries' geography, history, culture, daily life, and contributions to the arts. Field trips enhance their understanding and knowledge of Hispanic culture. All eighth graders have the option of spending two weeks at an intensive language school in a Spanish-speaking country, living with host families, and furthering their cultural understanding and language skills abroad.

Spanish in Sixth Grade:

- Present tense of regular verbs: ar, er, ir
- Present tense of some irregular verbs
- Possessive adjectives
- Nouns, articles, and adjectives: gender and number
- Interrogative words and construction of questions
- Telling time
- Future tense using ir + a + verb
- Vocabulary: greetings, weather expressions, numbers, food, school items
- Linguistic sounds and corresponding symbols

Spanish in Seventh Grade:

- Review and reinforcement of the material previously covered
- Present tense of irregular verbs
- Direct object pronouns
- Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns
- Prepositions of location
- Comparison of equality and inequality
- Commands (formal and familiar, affirmative and negative)
- Contrast between ser vs. estar, conocer vs. saber, pedir vs. preguntar, and ir vs. venir
- Present progressive
- Preterit tense of regular verbs

Spanish in Eighth Grade:

- Review and reinforcement of the material previously covered
- Preterit of regular and irregular verbs
- Imperfect tense of regular and irregular verbs
- Reflexive verbs and pronouns
- Negative words
- Introduction to present perfect tense
- Introduction to the prepositions: por and para
- Caer bien, caer mal, and gustar
- Ojalá with present, past, and past perfect subjunctive

Textbooks

We use different textbooks that are designed for both beginning and intermediate students. Some are used as a guide for many different activities in class and others provide homework assignments. In addition to the books, there are many supplemental materials including magazines and video language programs to which the students are exposed. Here are some of the texts and resources used in our program:

- *iEn Español!* textbook and *Más Practica* workbook from McDougall and Littell
- *Mi Libro de Gramática* from Española
- *Action English Pictures* (an action series picture sequences book)
- *iYa Escribimos!*, *iAsí Escribimos!*, and *iA Escribir!* from National Textbook Company
- *Muzzy* from Early Advantage
- *iAhora! iEl Sol!* from Scholastic Magazines
-

Homework

Homework should take about 20 minutes. During the year, the students will be asked to research a topic or work on a specific project. In addition to regular homework, long-term assignments and extra work will also be assigned at intervals. Because homework is an extension and/or reinforcement of what is covered in class, it is important to do it when it is assigned. If an emergency arises and homework is not completed, a note from a parent with a brief explanation will be appreciated. The academic planner and the LaunchPad (BPC's upper school homework site) are the best ways for parents to keep track of Spanish homework. Please make sure your child has a Spanish-English dictionary available at home.

Quizzes / Tests

Short quizzes will be given on a regular basis. A test will be given after the completion of each chapter/unit or after we have covered a grammatical point. Dates for tests will be announced in advance.

MANDARIN in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

In our Mandarin program, students will immerse themselves in the culture of one of the world's oldest civilizations: Ancient China.

Students will learn Chinese language and culture through stories, songs, tongue twisters, chanting, plays, and poems. While learning all these, students will also learn relevant grammar. Students will build listening and comprehension skills, develop speaking skills, and practice reading and writing skills.

A variety of approaches will be used throughout the school year, including TPRS (Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling), the Project Approach, and Socratic Seminars etc. Students will participate in hands-on activities such as creating Chinese food recipes, comic strips, posters, charts, acting out stories, and giving individual or group oral presentations.

All eighth graders studying Mandarin will be offered an opportunity to travel abroad to China to further their cultural understanding and language skills.

Specifically, students will be able to achieve the following:

Listening: Students will understand short, fixed utterances and some sentence-length utterances, especially where context supports understanding and speech is clear. Students will also be able to comprehend limited vocabulary and some simple questions and statements about family members, age, address, time, locations, interests, needs, and daily activities.

Speaking: Students will become comfortable making short statements and asking simple questions, primarily by relying on memorized utterances, but occasionally by combining familiar phrases and fragments. Vocabulary at this point centers on areas such as common objects, places, daily activities, and hobbies, etc.

Reading: Students will learn to identify a limited number of character components and frequently used Chinese characters. Students will be able to read typical messages for instructional and directional purposes, such as prices in stores, times and dates on schedules, and simple realia.

Writing: Students will practice writing fixed expressions and short statements. At this time, their vocabulary work will focus on areas such as common objects, places, daily activities, and hobbies, etc. Students will also be able to write names, numbers, dates, their own nationality, and other simple autobiographical information, as well as some short phrases.

Text and Materials

- *Tell Me More! A TPRS Curriculum (Mandarin Version)*
- Mini-stories from *Look, I Can Talk! (Mandarin Version)*
- Variety of Mandarin picture books
- *Chinese Made Easy 1* and *Chinese Made Easy 1 Workbook (Simplified Characters Version)*—for 6th & 7th grade only
- Mandarin program videos

- Chinese textbook and workbook sheets
- Tongue twisters, songs, & plays
- Articles from newspapers and magazines

Assessment

Students are assessed on the following:

Class participation: Active participation in class activities, discussions, and presentations is important in this class.

Class Work: Students' class work will be collected and kept in their portfolio folder to be assessed for the semester.

Writings: Students will be rewriting the learned stories and creating their own stories.

Dictations: Words and phrases dictations are given once a week to help students to lay solid foundation of Mandarin vocabulary. It is very important for students to spend time regularly reviewing and memorizing the words assigned for each week.

Homework: Regular homework will be assigned and should take about 15-20 minutes. Assignments will be given from the assigned workbook, or from class activities and projects. The purpose of homework for Mandarin class is to review what students have learned in class and reinforce their memory of the knowledge, so it is important to do it when is assigned. The academic planner and homework page on LaunchPad are the best ways for parents to keep track of Mandarin homework. Please make sure your child has a Mandarin-English & English-Mandarin dictionary available at home.

Late assignments will be accepted with deducted credits unless there are extraordinary mitigating circumstances. If an emergency arises and homework is not completed, a note from a parent with a brief explanation will be appreciated. All late assignments must be turned in within one week of the original due date or they will not be accepted. Learning a foreign language is not easy, so practicing is one of the most important elements in mastering the language.

Quizzes/Tests: Tests are not a major focus in sixth grade, but small quizzes are given occasionally to help show students how they are doing in a particular skill area. Quizzes will be given more often in seventh and eighth grades. Study skills are incorporated into the curriculum to help students prepare successfully for assessments. There will be no mid-term or final exam.

ART in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

The goal of the upper school art program is to instill in students an appreciation of art, both as creators and as viewers. This is achieved through instruction in specific skills, introduction to a broad range of media and materials, and exposure to the art of different times and cultures.

Art class focuses on students creating artwork, improving technical skills, experimenting with different media, critiquing their work informally, and having the opportunity to exhibit their work on an ongoing basis. Students view the work of many artists and cultures throughout history, thus developing an understanding of what goes into the making of art, a greater understanding of how life and art connect, and a sense of their own creative process.

Sixth graders study an artist of their choice, write a report on the artist, and make a piece of work in the style of the artist. The project culminates in an oral presentation to the class. The wealth of knowledge gained is built upon in seventh and eighth grades.

Students are required to keep sketchbooks as a place to express themselves; practice techniques; plan projects; and write definitions, art language, and information about artists. These become logs of the year's work, and students can look back through them to see how their skills have improved over the year.

There will be occasional homework assignments, for example, to watch a special show, make a few sketches, look up an artist online, or visit a museum exhibit.

Projects this year may include:

- **Drawing:** still life, self-portraits and figure drawing, landscapes, imaginary works
- **Design:** logos, posters, t-shirts, etc.
- **Painting:** color mixing and color theory, watercolor, tempera, acrylic, sand painting
- **Printmaking:** soft-cut rubber, monoprints, collographs
- **Collage**
- **Textiles:** weaving, sewing
- **Sculpture:** wire, clay, paper mache, wood, junk, stone carving

Student work will be exhibited throughout the year in our gallery, located in the hallway of the FAD theater and at our end of year art exhibit.

DRAMA in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

Black Pine Circle School's drama program gives students an additional avenue to express their creativity as well as learn some basic theater skills. Confidence in speaking publicly, preparation for presentation, and the fun of pretending are key components of this class. This class encourages students to express themselves with words, body language, and imagination.

Sixth Grade

Sixth graders will work on fundamental improvisational techniques throughout the year. They will cover basic stage skills and presentation. The sixth grade program includes ongoing class performances, a storytelling section, and a section devoted to a work, or works, of Shakespeare.

Seventh Grade

Seventh grade will continue working on improvisational skills throughout the year. Basic stage skills and presentation will also be reviewed and worked on at a higher level. There will be units on monologues, two-person and small group scenes, and a unit devoted to exploring a work of Shakespeare.

Eighth Grade

Eighth graders work towards an all-class open performance that represents the culmination of their skills. Character development, improvisation, performance techniques, and play writing are covered throughout the year. Eighth graders also work with one Shakespeare play, often in conjunction with their English class.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

The goal of physical education in the upper school is to help students to develop a lifelong appreciation of physical activity along with an understanding of the connection between a healthy body and a healthy mind.

Instruction includes:

- Proper warm-up and stretching techniques
- Basic knowledge, both physical and mental, of a wide range of sports methods and strategies that lead to successful team achievement
- Use and understanding of common expressions and language used in specific sports and athletic events
- Strength training and aerobic fitness exercise

Physical education encourages students to put forth their maximum effort and bring their best attitude to class daily. With the understanding that mistakes are a part of life and that taking healthy risks leads to greater learning, students are encouraged to experiment with physical movements and ideas.

Proper shoes and clothes that allow for free and safe movement are necessary and mandatory for students to participate fully in each class.

Sixth Grade Theme: Having an Open Mind about Physical Education

Sixth grade P.E. offers an opportunity for each student to develop a positive physical self-image, which will be either the starting point or continuance of a healthy lifestyle.

Seventh Grade Theme: Pushing Past Limits

Seventh graders will be challenged to extend themselves past any physical or mental limits they have set for themselves. There will be ample opportunity for students to break barriers they may have never approached before.

Eighth Grade Theme: Looking Ahead

Our eighth graders are at the point where they are starting to, or continuing to, make decisions about which sports, if any, they want to make a priority. For those who are focused on continuing a steady diet of competition, P.E. provides an atmosphere of recreation and an outlet from their everyday commitments, while still providing an opportunity to work on fundamentals. For those students who are less interested in competition, P.E. provides a great opportunity for them to experiment freely and perhaps gain a lifelong love of a sport or activity at a recreational level.

COMMUNICATIONS in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

While some communications units (e.g., debate and journalism) focus directly on communication skills, many are devoted to developing students' social, emotional, and learning intelligence.

Sixth Grade

The communications curriculum begins with a unit on the concepts of active and respectful listening and non-verbal communication, and examines conflict resolution through a series of "social-triangle" vignettes.

Seventh Grade

The communications curriculum in seventh grade includes a unit on media literacy. We examine how advertisers, and the media in general, can manipulate public perception of what is normal, desirable, or important, and covers some specific techniques advertisers use to get their messages across successfully. In a separate unit, students learn about various thinking and learning styles, to see that there are many different "kinds of smart," and that learners might prefer different ways of studying for tests or participating in discussions. This unit can also incorporate the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory to teach the concept of different personality

types and of personality inventories in general. Along with learning about the various personality-type distinctions in the Myers-Briggs, students examine how these preferences can translate into styles for handling conflict, friendships, goals, and projects, and eventually can even help identify compatible career choices. Especially in election years, often one of the above units will be replaced, or complemented, with a unit on politics.

Eighth Grade

The eighth grade curriculum includes a comprehensive drug education unit, in which students learn about the clinical terminology (and vernacular expressions) of common narcotics and then examine the physical and psychological relationship various drugs have to the brain, body, and behavior. Separately, by Winter Break students will complete a proposal for their MasterWork. The MasterWork is an interdisciplinary project in which students identify an interest or passion, and from that develop a project that requires research and new learning across several areas of study.

DANCE in Six, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

Each grade has one trimester of dance classes. In dance we will explore somatic movement, mindfulness, and modern and contemporary dance forms. Emphasis will be placed on encouraging students to express themselves freely through dance and movement.

ADVISORY and SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) in Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades:

In the Upper School at Black Pine Circle, social-emotional learning is woven into everyday school life. All faculty members understand that they hold a dual role as teacher and mentor and they recognize that many of the most valuable lessons and teachable moments occur outside of the classroom. The advisory system is central to the teaching of social-emotional lessons and also serves as support for social-emotional issues. The upper school advisory system assigns a teacher to small gender-split groups of students wherein the role of the advisor is to develop a bond with the group and serve as mentor and advocate for each student. Each advisory group has a weekly meeting time and advisories come together monthly in both grade level groups and as a class in gender-split groups to learn about and explore topics germane to navigating middle school life and adolescence. Topics in advisory this year will include: healthy body image, conflict resolution, refusal skills, bully-proofing, internet safety, cultural competency, humor (impact vs. intention), managing stress, relational aggression, and growth vs. fixed mindset.

Sixth Grade Advisory focuses on beginnings and helps students with the transition to middle school. Identity and diversity are explored as students get to

know themselves and others through small group and large group activities. Understanding how BPC “works” and exploring how one can develop effective social skills and executive function skills is central to this year.

Seventh Grade Advisory focuses on growth and complexity and investigates what intellectual and social growth each student wishes to strive for. Relationships, understanding the perspective of others and navigating friendship, competition and emotion are all examined this year.

Eighth Grade Advisory focuses on leadership skills and challenges each student to understand how they think, feel, and behave. Students begin the process of preparing themselves for, and underlining the strengths that they are taking with them to, high school.

The curriculum for advisory is pulled from the nonprofit organization, *Smart Girl*, of Colorado, the *Developmental Designs* program of Origins, the resources of the National Association of Independent Schools, and from numerous other sources selected by the faculty in concert with the school administration and the learning support team. Further education on topics including media literacy, drug and alcohol abuse, communication, and how the brain functions, are covered in a weekly communications class. A one-week unit on sex education is taught by nationally renowned educator and specialist, Ivy Chen. BPC faculty members sponsor a Diversity Club, a Black Student Union, and a Student Council, which often explore topics germane to social-emotional development in middle school. Weekly town hall meetings, advisory, and parent-student-teacher conferences bolster these social-emotional touchpoints at BPC. Throughout its program, BPC is intentional in preparing students for the journey of middle school, a task that entails supporting students to be socially cognizant, self-aware individuals who understand the importance of goodness and knowledge, as highlighted in Black Pine Circle School’s mission.