



BLACK PINE CIRCLE SCHOOL

A SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Considerate, Consider It!

Upper School Curriculum Guide 2014-2015

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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 practice 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 each 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, think, ask questions, 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

At the heart of the English program, there is a dual emphasis on learning to read and learning to write: learning to read for comprehension and deeper inference and learning to write correctly with clarity and meaning.

Sixth graders read throughout the year. They think, discuss, and write in reading notebooks about the meaning, setting, characters, plot, theme, language, and writing style of 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 language through their own writing, 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 regularly 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. Once a week, 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. Specific emphasis will be paid to the San Francisco Bay where students will be gathering data from throughout the year.

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.

Technology: Basic technology skills will be integrated into science classes. Students will learn to use cloud-based applications through Google Apps for Education (Email, Docs, Spreadsheets, Presentations, Drawing, Forms, etc.) and other free web-based tools (Wikispaces and Google Earth & Maps). Topics in digital citizenship will be discussed, including email etiquette and online peer feedback. Students will practice effective online research strategies and take a careful look at copyright, fair use, and Creative Commons licensing in their own work. Students also practice keyboarding using a self-pacing online typing program: Typing Pal Online.

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, perhaps the only question, is, “What’s going on here?” In sixth grade history we study world history from around 20,000 years ago to about the year 1000 CE. We will try to discover “what’s going on here” with the following:

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 (the beginning of agriculture)
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)

Most class periods will begin with daily geography lessons based on either *The National Geographic Student Atlas of the World* or *The Hammond Atlas of World History*. In sixth grade, the emphasis will be placed on world physical geography.

The aim 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.

Finally, since storytelling is such an important part of being a historian, we will read a lot of stories. These will include both “factual” tales and creation myths. Both types of stories provide the opportunity for exploring the question of where myth ends and history begins, and vice versa. For our big project of the year, each student will select a story from history to research and re-tell both orally and in writing.

MANDARIN in Sixth Grade:

In our Mandarin course, 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 in the book *Look, I Can Talk* and in other Chinese fiction and non-fiction picture storybooks. Students will also learn Mandarin through engaging lessons in the textbook *Chinese Made Easy*. Students will practice and improve their Mandarin through a wide range of integrated activities that accompany the lessons in the textbook and workbook. Along the way, students will also learn Mandarin plays, tongue twisters, poems, songs, and games.

Students will build listening and comprehension skills, develop speaking skills, and practice reading and writing skills. We will use a variety of approaches throughout the school year, including TPRS (Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling), project-based assignments, and Socratic Seminars etc. Students will participate in hands-on activities such as creating Chinese food recipes, comic strips, posters, charts, and giving individual or group oral presentations.

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.

Homework: Regular homework will be assigned and should take about 15-25 minutes. Assignments will be given from the textbook and workbook, or from class activities and projects. Learning a foreign language is not easy, so practicing is one of the most important elements in mastering the language gradually.

Quizzes/Tests: Tests are not a major focus in sixth grade, but quizzes are given regularly to help 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.

MUSIC in Sixth Grade:

Goals

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, dexterity, spatial acuity, and confidence through healthy risk-taking.

Strands

How Music is Constructed (Music Theory / Music Literacy):

Students will:

- Decode, sight-sing, play, compose, and notate 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 online theory exercises, games, and composition projects

How Music Communicates a Culture (Music History / Sociology):

- Students will further their understanding of music as it relates to history, and gain familiarity with selected major composers, compositional forms and time periods through listening, discussion, and analysis.
- We will look at the social impact, instruments, timbres, and techniques of music in many cultures; and study spirituals as the beginnings of American contemporary music.

How Music Moves Us (Performance Practice):

- Singing: Students will practice vocal technique, sight-singing, improvisation, part songs, descants and ostinati, with repertoire in a variety of musical styles and genres
- Movement: Mind-body experiences of musical concepts.
- Classes will perform choral repertoire for BPC music events, which usually include the Generations Day performance, Winter Concert, and Spring Concert
- Students will reflect on their musical performances and their application of expressive techniques for performing music
- Soloists may choose to perform at Solo Day, assemblies, or for their classes.
- Students may choose to join the bands, orchestra, and singing club, and form small ensembles to play or sing at Ensemble Day.

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, perhaps the only question, is, "What's going on here?" In seventh grade history we study world history from around 1000 years ago to the 1800s. We will strive to discover "what's going on" with the following:

1. Castles and cathedrals (Middle Ages Europe; Feudal Japan)
2. Dante in Limbo among "pagans" and Muslims (Islam; Renaissance)
3. The Great Wall of China (Chinese Isolationism; Age of Exploration; Columbian exchange)
4. Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms and Galileo before the Inquisition (Reformation; Scientific Revolution)
5. William Clark and a creature unknown to science (Enlightenment)

6. Captain Jack Aubrey, in the film *Master and Commander*, telling his men, “This ship is England.” (French Revolution; Nationalism)
7. The Mill Girls of Lowell, Massachusetts (Industrial Revolution; Women’s Rights)

Class will begin with daily geography lessons based on either *The National Geographic Student Atlas of the World* or *The Hammond Atlas of World History*. In seventh grade, the emphasis will be placed on world political geography.

The aim 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.

Since historians tell the human story, we will read a lot of stories. These will include both “factual” tales and creation myths. Both types of stories provide the opportunity for exploring the question of where myth ends and history begins, and vice versa. For our big project of the year, each student will select a story from history to research and re-tell both orally and in writing.

MATH in Seventh and Eighth Grades:

The mathematics 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*

MANDARIN in Seventh Grade:

In our Mandarin course, students will continue to learn Chinese language and culture through engaging lessons in the textbook *Integrated Chinese*. Students will practice and improve their Mandarin through a wide range of integrated activities that accompany the lessons in the textbook, workbook, and character books. Students will also learn Mandarin plays, stories, tongue twisters, poems, songs, and games. Students will build listening and comprehension skills, develop speaking skills, and practice reading and writing skills. We will use a variety of approaches throughout the school year, including project-based assignments, TPRS (Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling), and Socratic Seminars etc. Students will participate in hands-on activities such as creating Chinese food recipes, comic strips, posters, charts, and giving individual or group oral presentations.

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.

In addition to the textbooks mentioned above, we will also use other reading materials, such as Chinese fiction, Chinese non-fiction storybooks, Chinese picture books, and Chinese newspapers and magazines.

Homework: Regular homework will be assigned and should take about 15-25 minutes. Assignments will be given from the textbook, workbook, and character workbook, or from class activities and projects. Learning a foreign language is not easy, so practicing is one of the most important elements in mastering the language gradually.

Quizzes/Tests: Quizzes will be given more often than in sixth grade 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.

TECHNOLOGY in Seventh Grade:

BPC's seventh 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 like Wikispaces, Google Earth & Scratch.

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:

Weekly journal: Journal assignments will include goal setting, tracking personal use of technology, reflecting on a student’s own learning, and discussions around class topics or technology developments in the news.

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.

ENGLISH in Eighth Grade:

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

Students:

- 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
- Improve 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

As in seventh grade, eighth graders write in journals 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. We incorporate regular grammar exercises into class and we encourage retention 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. Students are responsible for contributing to the learning community by taking on rotating roles as blogger, Socratic Seminar leaders, etymologists, etc.

We use various critical methods including formalism, structuralism, deconstructionism, and psychoanalytic theory. We also use Marxist, feminist/gender/queer, and ethnic/post-colonialist theories to understand elements of identity and diversity in the literary works. Students participate in group work and class presentations in order to teach each other the ways in which different voices, disciplines, socio-historical events, and other cultural productions interact with the literature of a particular period.

The curriculum in eighth grade English is built around utopias and dystopias, using the seventh grade English curriculum theme of the American Dream as a point of departure. Students observe how the authorial intent behind dystopian or utopian societies fits into and departs from the concerns that supposedly typify the respective time frames. They analyze and criticize the lessons readers are expected to absorb and apply to their own lives and personal moralities. After students consider real historical dystopias and (attempts at) utopias, they then posit reasons why modernity and technology feed utopias and dystopias within the speculative genre of science fiction.

In addition to a unit on poetry, works this year may include "City on a Hill," "The Lottery," "Shooting an Elephant," "The Veldt," "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," "Harrison Bergeron," "A Modest Proposal," *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, *Utopia*, *Animal Farm*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Tempest*, *Brave New World*, *1984*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Erewhon*, *Herland*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Wuthering Heights*. This list will certainly change, but should give an idea of the scope of the course.

SCIENCE in Seventh and Eighth Grades:

Philosophy

Science is not about memorizing “big words.” Science is about being curious, asking questions, exploring data, asking more questions, researching, and making connections between what you learn and what you already know.

Curriculum

The most important goal of science class is to foster students’ curiosity about how the world works and help students develop basic explanations for natural phenomena, as well as the ability to ask good questions and apply experimental procedures to collect and analyze data. The curriculum is based around some basic topics, while allowing for the flexibility to explore areas of student inquiry, interest, and current events.

Seventh grade life science units include:

Classification and small things: This unit introduces taxonomy and highlights the evolutionary relationships between all living organisms. Students will explore microscopes and sizes ranging into micro- and nanometers.

Meet the microbes: 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 their most important functioning parts 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 as we consider the great rewards and inherent ethical considerations of these new technologies.

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.

Various topics: We will explore topics of genetics, vertebrate animals, plants, and ecology as time permits.

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.

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.

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.

Eighth grade science units include:

Volume and mass: Students will review measurement skills and practice their safe lab technique in this short introductory unit that introduces the concept of physical versus chemical change.

Mass changes in closed systems: Students will explore a wide variety of ways mass is conserved in closed systems, and potentially not conserved in open systems. Experimental design will be a focus, including the use of histograms while looking at class data and doing effective 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 various 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 “mystery mix.”

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.

Various topics: We will explore topics in pressure, energy, radioactivity, nanoscience, and/or forces as time permits.

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

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: We are a nation peopled by the world.

From the first days of European settlements in North America, immigration and migration have shaped the country today called the United States. Nearly everyone in the United States is either an immigrant or a descendant of immigrants from the relatively recent past. Using *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* by Rebecca Steffo and Ronald Takaki as a grounding text, we will explore U.S. history with an emphasis on immigration and migration perspectives, such as mass migration during the Industrial Revolution and “Manifest Destiny.” We will also examine the history, ethics, and Constitutional underpinnings of forced relocations like the Trail of Tears and the WWII internment of Japanese citizens. Forced migration of Africans, as part of the slave trade, and forced exclusion of Chinese under the Chinese Exclusion Act will also be examined. Finally, we will examine the cultural and economic impacts (positive and negative) that modern voluntary immigration has had on our society.

As a framework, we will consider four essential tensions that America has struggled to balance since its founding:

Unity vs. Diversity: We celebrate our unity as one American nation, but we also cherish our diversity. How do these values clash? How do they reinforce each other?

Freedom vs. Equality: Too much freedom for some can threaten equality for all. But the quest for equality can limit individual freedoms. How do we balance these?

Private Wealth vs. Common Wealth: The accumulation of individual wealth is the invisible hand that controls our economy and coordinates our actions. Yet we must also contribute to the needs of the community. How do we reconcile the conflicts? Do they depend on each other?

Law vs. Ethics: We are a nation of laws, but American heroes have protested or even rebelled against laws that were unethical. When is the right time for protest? What are the right means?

The ultimate goal of the class is to help the students become deep-thinking, active, skillful global 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 events throughout history
- 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!)

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
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, in a varied repertoire of music
- Singing, alone and with others, with a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
- Reading and notating music
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Evaluating music and music performances
- Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Understanding 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 my personalized program that uses various songs and texts including but not limited to: *Ukulele in the Classroom* by James Hill

and Melanie Doane and various songs and techniques that I have used over the years. 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 and to use 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 my 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, continuously 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 reference materials and in the course 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 Socrate's 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 we walk 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. I aim to have the BPC students participate in different groups every week.

Before we go to Via Center and meet the students, the 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 students is having a difficult day.

Over the years that I have run this community service program I have found it very rewarding for myself, and, from reviewing the students' writing, I am convinced that it 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 Costa Rica, 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 to provide homework. In addition to the books, there are many supplemental materials, magazine and video language programs to which the students are exposed. These are some of the texts and resources we use 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 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 BPC upper school homework wiki page 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.

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**
- **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

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:

Through a daily regimen of “vitamins,” upper school P.E. classes teach and reinforce:

- 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
- Types of communication employed in the athletic world
- Strength training and aerobic fitness exercises

We encourage students to put forth their maximum effort and best attitude. Mistakes are a part of life, and students are never ostracized while experimenting with movements or ideas with which they may not be familiar.

In order to maximize understanding of different sports, we focus on three sports annually. The first, second, and third quarters of the year will each be dedicated to a specific sport, while the fourth quarter will be used as a review session in which students get a more in-depth experience through practical application of each sport.

Each unit will be sprinkled with recreational games and organized free time to allow students to pursue their personal athletic interests.

Sixth Grade Theme: Creating an Identity through Physical Activity

Being new to the Upper School often creates many identity crises among sixth graders. 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

Students often fall into the trap of setting limits on themselves. Seventh graders will be challenged to extend themselves past any physical or mental limits they have built. There will be ample opportunity for students to break barriers they may have never approached otherwise.

Eighth Grade Theme: Looking Ahead

Our eighth graders are at the point where they are starting or continuing to make decisions on 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 as an outlet from their everyday commitments, while still providing everyday work on fundamentals. For those who are less interested in competition, P.E. provides a great opportunity for students 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. In sixth grade, if time allows for this unit, students also interview an older person from a different culture about the values, norms, roles, customs, and traditions that are important and/or unique to that culture, and present to the class on behalf of that culture.

Seventh Grade

The communications curriculum in seventh grade includes a unit on 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 also includes a comprehensive drug education unit, in which students learn about “uppers” (stimulants), “downers” (sedatives), and “all-arounders” (hallucinogens), and 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, an in-depth interdisciplinary project students work on at home, but which includes some check-in and planning time in communications class.

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.

BPC UPPER SCHOOL FACULTY 2014-15

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