

GRADE EIGHT
2007-2008



The curriculum for grade eight is designed to excite the students' interests in civics, literature, science, history and all of the subject areas inherent in a liberal arts education. While the curriculum enhances the basic skills students need to be successful in school and in life, it also encourages students to be aware of their role in the greater world. Students are encouraged to develop independent study and work habits, to bring projects to a satisfying conclusion and to effectively communicate their ideas to others, both in the written word and orally. A top priority is for students to gain self-confidence. Topics are presented with material and perspective from more than one discipline, which leads to learning across the curriculum. Eighth graders are encouraged to make interdisciplinary connections and to recognize that nothing exists in isolation. Students in the eighth grade develop an individual sense of responsibility, and they contribute positively to the overall atmosphere of the school. Eighth graders take on a variety of roles within the school and in the larger community. This helps them to think beyond themselves and to understand that they can be a positive influence in a variety of settings. This also prepares them for their high school experiences.

Community service projects are ongoing, and The Grammar School's connection with Putney Family Services is an anchor to the world beyond TGS.

ENGLISH: The English program emphasizes the reading of good literature, creative and expository writing and language skill development. Literature is selected from different genres: non-fiction, biography, drama, poetry, short story and novel. Each selection serves as a model of expression and provides a basis for writing assignments and vocabulary development. In choosing literary selections, consideration is given to American Studies topics and texts that connect to current social issues. Class discussion is of utmost importance and participation is required.

Students complete David Popkin's accelerated vocabulary program Energizers II. Exercises in Grammar serves as a basic grammar text for the eighth grade. In addition, individual follow-up work in grammar and vocabulary is based on the needs indicated by each student's written papers. Students are expected to develop the habits of dictionary use, proofreading, and keyboarding. Students write first and final drafts of major writing assignments.

Literature selections for the eighth grade will draw from the following works: *The Day They Came to Arrest the Bookers* (N. Hentoff), *The Crucible* (Miller), *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain), *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger), *Johnny Tremain* (Forbes), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper), *To Be A Slave* (Lester) and *April Morning* (Fast), *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* (Lee and Lawrence), *Hiroshima* (Hersey).

MATHEMATICS: In the eighth grade students undertake a formal course in algebra. They will study functions and explore different methods for solving linear, simultaneous, and quadratic equations through graphing, addition and subtraction, and factoring. While learning about algebra, students will experience the subject both as an intellectual exercise and as an appropriate tool for finding solutions to a variety of problems.

Eighth grade math is traditionally split into two classes at The Grammar School. One group works on introductory algebra, which readies students for an Algebra I course in ninth grade. The other group has a more specific, directed focus to complete a full Algebra I course. Both groups use Harold Jacob's Elementary Algebra as the text for the year.

AMERICAN STUDIES: An overview of important events and people from the explorers to the twentieth century will provide students with a chronological framework of American History. Students will develop a timeline, learn American History facts, use primary sources to perceive different points of view, and understand periods, movements and the role of the individual in shaping history. Each eighth grader will also complete a full research paper, of at least 8 pages on a topic of his or her choice. Field trips may include visits to Fort #4, Fruitlands, Salem, Boston, Lexington and Concord, Montpelier, Vermont and Washington, D.C.

American Studies undertakes an in depth look of the First Amendment and how it influences censorship and issues surrounding banned books. Each student will write a paper on an assigned aspect of censorship and how it relates to the First Amendment. The texts for the course are *The Story of America* and *We The People*, and, in addition, chapters by Howard Zinn will be read to get another view of events. Students read "The Constitution," "The Declaration of Independence," and "The Emancipation Proclamation." Students are required to read or listen to the news three times a week, in order to supplement reading assignments in the monthly New York Times magazine *Upfront* which is used in class.

Skill goals will be directed toward gathering information and recording it in an orderly manner (lecture notes, reading notes, research cards) and toward strong convincing written communication of ideas in essays and research papers. Use of the internet is required for three projects. Active participation in class at all levels is required by questioning, providing information, forming opinions and responding to others. Students will gain confidence and pleasure in contributing their knowledge and understanding to others and enjoy the sense of story that lies behind history.

SCIENCE: The goals of eighth grade science are to study a body of knowledge, to understand and become comfortable working with the scientific method, to become skilled in the writing of research papers and lab reports, and to engage students in the discussion of relevant topics.

The students will start with a brief study of weather and an introduction to the structure of the Earth's atmosphere. Making and using weather instruments, and observing local weather patterns will be the focus of this unit. We will then have an introduction to chemistry including the periodic table, acid/base chemistry, and the properties of some consumer products.

During the middle of the year, an extended independent project will be undertaken by each student. The year will conclude with a study of the systems of the human body. Topics and themes in health will be used to connect the different systems.

Three texts will be used in conjunction with the reading of relevant articles from various sources. These are Exploring Earth's Atmosphere, Human Biology and Health, and the Chemistry of Matter. The Internet is used extensively for research. Students are also encouraged to find and discuss science related articles and broadcasts in the popular media.

FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM: The Family Life Curriculum for the eighth grade will be covered during science and include a look at how pregnancy occurs, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases and infections. The emphasis is on responsibility to oneself, one's family and friends, and one's values.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL CURRICULUM: The eighth grade science course covers different types of drugs and their physiological effect on the body. Situations are discussed where decisions about drug use and abuse need to be made.

SOCIAL CURRICULUM: The social curriculum at TGS is designed to complement the academic curriculum and help maintain a healthy social and learning environment. This includes a series of "Community Life" classes at all grade levels that complements and reinforces the classroom based social curricular activities and goals. We define a healthy school community as a place where people have a sense of belonging, where adults and students extend and receive respect in their relationships with each other, and where people feel both a sense of support and personal challenge to help them learn and grow as human beings.

The Community Life classes help highlight and develop important community skills such as cooperation, team building, personal and social responsibility, deep listening, mindful speech, emotional literacy, respect for diversity, conflict resolution, stress reduction, relaxation, self-awareness and problem solving.

HOMEWORK: Eighth graders can expect forty-five minutes of homework per subject each time the class meets. Usually one and a half to two hours nightly is sufficient to allow older students to complete their assignments. This often varies widely from student to student.

PHYSICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: Physical skills development in grade eight is a program designed to give a child a chance to develop physically through play, games, and skill tasks. Activities are planned to stress various underlying themes of the program: strength and endurance (muscular and cardiovascular), flexibility, coordination, game skills, sportsmanship and social interaction. The daily program varies the size and structure of the groups. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students are integrated and guided by three teachers each period. The fall curriculum includes two classes each week focusing on Presidential Fitness guidelines, one practicing cooperative games, and one for general aerobic fitness,

building up to the timed mile run. After-school cross-country running practice and meets are scheduled through the fall. During the winter, eighth graders cross-country ski on the TGS trails, skate with fifth-eighth graders at the Vermont Academy rink, and have a choice between cross-country skiing at Grafton Ponds or downhill skiing or snowboarding instruction at Okemo. Spring activities include softball and Frisbee, as well as other coordination and skill games. Spring activities include both team and cooperative games as well as some track and field sports.