



GRADE EIGHT, 2009 - 2010

The curriculum for eighth grade 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 our connection with Putney Family Services is an anchor to the world beyond TGS.

ENGLISH: Eighth grade English emphasizes the reading of good literature, creative and expository writing, listening, and language skill development. Literature is selected from different genres: non-fiction, biography, drama, poetry, short story, and the 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. English class meets five periods per week.

Students complete David Popkin's accelerated vocabulary program *Energizers II*. The website program <http://englishgrammar101.com/> serves as a grammar program 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, peer editing, 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 Crucible* (Miller), *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain), *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger), *Johnny Tremain* (Forbes), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper), *To Be A Slave* (Lester), *April Morning* (Fast), *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* (Lee and Lawrence), and *Hiroshima* (Hersey).

MATH: The eighth grade uses the text *Algebra*. This is a University of Chicago School Mathematics Program (UCSMP) middle school component that coordinates smoothly with our K- 6 grade *Everyday Mathematics* program. Problem solving, everyday applications, technology, and reading, as well as developing and maintaining basic skills, are emphasized in this curriculum.

As mathematicians, students are asked to participate in class actively through discussion, shared work on the board, group work, and projects. They are required to read the math text as well as to

write when explaining their mathematical thinking. The students will continue to use new applications for the graphing calculator in eighth grade.

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 start with a brief study of weather and an introduction to the structure of Earth's atmosphere. Making and using weather instruments and observing local weather patterns are the focus of this unit. We 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 concludes 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 *Chemistry of Matter* (Prentice Hall). 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 is covered during science and includes 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.

AMERICAN STUDIES: An overview of important events and people from the explorers to the 20th 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 complete a full research paper, of at least eight pages, on a topic of his or her choice. Field trips may include visits to Fort #4, Salem, Boston, Lexington and Concord, Montpelier, Gettysburg, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, or Washington, D.C. American Studies undertakes an in-depth look at 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*. 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. Students gather information and record it in an orderly manner (lecture notes, reading notes, research cards) to strengthen their writing 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.

ART: The eighth grade art experience brings together all of the skills and knowledge gained in the past. Students are expected to create sophisticated and thoughtful works of art. The art history component focuses on modern and contemporary art. Students continue to use out-of-class time to research and plan art pieces executed in class. Conceptual artists from the 1970s to the present are studied and each student creates several conceptual works. Other projects undertaken in past years have been constructed paper shoes, acrylic layer paintings in the 15th-century style, shadow puppets, and Dream Windows that draw on Andrew Wyeth and Salvador Dali. The year culminates with a student-designed exhibition that is a retrospective of art from their time at The Grammar School.

FRENCH: This year we will be using the text book *Amis et compagnie*. This series is designed with middle school students in mind, featuring teenage characters and engaging adventures with the Three Musketeers. An accompanying CD provides a sound track of native French speakers with authentic accents for auditory and oral exercises, and a workbook provides written exercises. Young learners of French will enjoy the songs, games, and reading and writing built around a body of vocabulary. Topics in this series include school belongings, family, tastes, favorite activities, towns and schedules, descriptions of people, clothing and parties, the house, and meals. Additionally, the new language series *Qtalk*, which employs pictures as a mechanism to promote oral proficiency, will be used to get students speaking more in class. There will be regular homework. The seventh and eighth grades will combine to meet in two multi-age groups, each group meeting three times a week, twice for 40 minutes and once for 50 minutes, in the French room.

MUSIC AND TECHNOLOGY: The music program is an integral part of the TGS curriculum with all students in K-8 having three music classes per week. The primary goals are: developing an appreciation for music; singing on-pitch; reading music and playing an instrument; dancing cooperatively; taking direction and performing on stage. Basic computer skills and an introduction to music technology are also important components of the program. Students work in groups, individually, and with several faculty members throughout the year in different learning situations.

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 and relaxation, self-awareness, and problem solving.

LIBRARY: Eighth graders will make use of the Upper School and main libraries to support class work and reading for pleasure. They will meet with the librarian for instruction in citing sources for research purposes.

PHYSICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: This program is 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), coordination, game skills, sportsmanship, and social interaction. Seventh and eighth graders have PSD in two mixed class groups of about 15 students each during the fall. The fall curriculum includes one class each week focusing on Presidential Fitness guidelines, one working with Chris Harlow and Paul Hopkins on challenge course activities, 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. In winter seventh 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 team and cooperative games as well as some track and field sports.