

# University of Chicago Laboratory Schools

## Mission Statement

The Laboratory Schools are home to the youngest members of the University of Chicago's academic community. We ignite and nurture an enduring spirit of scholarship, curiosity, creativity, and confidence. We value learning experientially, exhibiting kindness, and honoring diversity.

### The Middle School

The Middle School Program is based upon the following principles:

- All students at a particular grade level should have a set of common curricular and co-curricular experiences.
- Each student's depth of inquiry and critical thinking skills should be nurtured and fostered.
- Each student should develop the ability to make connections through analysis, synthesis, and interpretation.
- Each student should get to know and feel confident about him or herself, and learn the meaning of personal commitment and responsibility to others.
- Each student should develop an understanding of and commitment to larger communities.

The Middle School program has been designed to remain true to the progressive education tenets of the founders of the Laboratory Schools, while simultaneously adapting its program of learning to the contemporary world. Though The Schools have already seen success in this area, continued improvement requires constant fine-tuning of the curriculum and reflection about The Schools' pedagogical approach, a process to which the Middle School is strongly committed. Through integrity and responsibility in our social and academic communities, we demonstrate our commitment to good citizenship.

The Middle School is committed to forming an overall curriculum that is creative, developmentally appropriate, and engaging. Our curriculum fosters verbal development and critical thinking, provides active learning experiences for our students, and encourages students to become increasingly independent learners. The teaching styles of our Middle School faculty represent a rich variety of conceptual, pedagogical, and philosophical approaches. Working within the framework of their departments, faculty members determine the appropriate program for their grade level and subject area.

A Middle School student experiences a stimulating synthesis of conceptual development, skill-acquisition, individual personal development, and academic growth. This approach allows students to take the lessons and values learned in the classroom into the rest of their lives. An appropriate middle school education helps students successfully meet challenges, take personal responsibility for their learning, and become active, creative, and thoughtful participants in creating change.

Along with academics, a strong emphasis is placed on being a responsible member of the community, understanding the effects of one's actions on others, having the courage to make difficult choices, and exploring the relationship between the individual and society.

Students are expected to act in ways that demonstrate respect for themselves, the community, and the learning process. In addition to the integral way these understandings are reinforced in each classroom, they are also supported by the distribution of our Middle School Student handbook to each student at the start of the school year.

# Grade Level Overview

## Sixth Grade

The sixth grade provides a transition for students into the Middle School to move students towards independence. Sixth grade maintains some elements of the homeroom structure by developing a teaching team within the grade level. Each team of teachers will teach the students on their team. This allows the students to develop independence while changing classroom for many disciplines, yet have a similar experience of sharing teachers. This also helps teachers to develop stronger relationships with a smaller number of students. This goal is also achieved through the advisory system.

The sixth-grade year is also marked with the first overnight class trip. The students will go to Camp McLean, an outdoor education camp in Wisconsin. This five-day trip is a great opportunity for students to learn about the outdoors and connect as a grade level.

## Seventh Grade

Seventh grade is a year where students will experience many changes. This is the first year where students will change classes for every discipline, have tutorials, and participate in the class camp experience. Seventh-grade camp is held at The Adventure Center at Pretty Lake in Michigan and focuses on team building and personal challenges.

The structure of the academic program changes only slightly with the addition of a Health and Wellness course in Physical Education, and the addition of Home Economics and Sustainability as a rotation class.

The opportunities for the co-curricular program also increase in the seventh grade. During this year, students are eligible to participate on Middle School athletic teams.

## Eighth Grade

The eighth grade is a year of culmination of the Middle School years. This year is structured the same as in the seventh grade. This year, students take on many leadership roles, particularly in activities, clubs, and the Middle School Student Council. The eighth-grade year ends with a class trip to Washington, D.C. This trip includes visits to many national monuments and allows student the opportunity to reflect on their Middle School years while preparing for high school.

The structure of the academic program changes only slightly with the addition of World Cuisines, Digital Photo Media, and the return of a Computer Science course as rotation classes.

## Advisory

The student advisory program at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools takes many forms throughout the different grades, with programs and curricula designed to support the appropriate developmental needs of students throughout their time at Lab. The advisory program aims to provide logistical, academic, social, and emotional support for students in a focused and responsive manner. One of the program's key goals is to foster an environment of inclusion and a feeling of community. Advisors often work together to coordinate activities and longer units, but they also retain a high degree of autonomy in how they respond to the needs of their advisees.

Starting in sixth grade, students no longer spend the majority of their time with a single homeroom teacher. Rather, they split their time with many different subject teachers, and have a designated advisor with whom they meet on a daily basis. The commitment to providing students with a small group and dedicated advisor reflects the Laboratory Schools' emphasis on building community while providing a consistent place for students to feel safe and supported during the beginning of adolescence. Advisors serve as their students' confidant, critic, and advocate, helping them navigate the difficulties of increased academic demands, a complex daily schedule, and, eventually, preparations for

high school.

Each advisor has twelve to sixteen students, and, with rare exceptions, each advisor sees their advisees in class as their subject teacher. Advisories meet for the first ten minutes of each day to go over the school bulletin, take attendance, and handle any logistical concerns for the day. Middle School advisories also meet twice a week for forty-five minutes. Advisors use these longer advisory periods to address academic, social, and emotional issues that arise within the grade during the course of the year. Advisors also help students prepare for the three major grade-level trips that focus on building community within the grades, with the sixth and seventh grades going to camps, and the eighth grade visiting Washington, D.C.

In seventh and eighth grade, students take an active role in parent-teacher conferences, creating detailed plans and leading the half hour conferences with both their advisors and their parents present. Students are assisted by their advisors, who guide them through the planning process in these constructive experiences. In eighth grade, advisors help organize the eighth-grade graduation ceremony. Eighth-grade advisors also provide guidance for students as they consider which high school to attend. At the end of the school year, eighth-grade advisors present personally chosen books to their students as a way of marking the end of their students' middle school experience.

## **Fine Arts**

At the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, visual arts classes in first through twelfth grades and drama classes in sixth through twelfth grades present art as a language with unique expressive powers. The acquisition of these powers enables students to fulfill the Schools' mission. The language of art also challenges students to fuse emotion and intuition with intellect. Through the study of art, each Laboratory Schools student is encouraged to value, respond to, and further develop, his or her own perceptions and observations as well as gain empathy and understanding for the views and feelings of others.

The Fine Arts Department works to ensure that students build skills and become more comfortable and confident in meeting the challenges of aesthetic self-expression at each level of its program. The Fine Arts Department has a flexible curriculum design, charging each teacher, in his or her own way, with the task of transmitting valuable, coherent artistic concepts at each grade level. At all levels, teachers employ techniques that accommodate a variety of learning styles in order to liberate and deepen our students' power of expression and mastery of essential skills.

To enable students to achieve success through creative effort, Fine Arts teachers initially teach basic concepts, which form the foundation for more advanced study. In both the visual and dramatic arts, students discover a heightened sense of awareness and confidence by developing their sensory perception and powers of observation. At all times and in all media, emphasis is placed on students' participation in the creative process.

Through aesthetic education, the Laboratory Schools' students find new ways to perceive their world. They form a relationship between themselves and the lives and art of other individuals and cultures. While working to create their own art, students develop a deeper and broader experience of culture and the humanities.

## **Visual Arts**

### **Sixth Grade**

The sixth-grade Visual Arts curriculum quickly reviews knowledge, communication and technical skills, and successful learning behaviors that were explored during the yearlong fifth-grade Fine Arts program. The curriculum then moves assertively to extend students' visual arts understanding by exploring the expressive "Power of the Artist." The curriculum is constructed to encourage students to investigate ways in which seemingly "non-visual" phenomena become the subject matter of visual expression and are given artistic form. This is accomplished by exploring the

formal ways artists create meaning in their work. Success is evaluated by the artist's ability to clearly communicate his or her meaning(s) to an audience.

- Honing Observational Skill

Following up on the fifth-grade program, students extend their ability to observe their world closely and accurately. Students are encouraged to continuously check the validity of their observations.

Skill and Subtlety in Recording Observations: Students review and extend their skills and increase their craftsmanship while manipulating various media with increasing accuracy, sensitivity, and expressiveness.

- Expressing the Non-Visible—The Real Subject of the Work of Art

Students are directed to create compositions that express particular emotions, ideas, non-visual sensory perceptions (olfactory, textural, aural, taste, and/or temperature), personalities, and character by controlling the ways in which observable phenomena can be variously drawn (or painted or sculptured) to evoke disparate meanings. Creating the "character" of an imaginary creature is one way that students have addressed this inquiry. Students move beyond the literal to express ideas in symbolic form.

- Connecting the Imagined to the Student's Experience of His/Her World

Students investigate the emotions of mythological characters and connecting these with one's own experiences, especially in regard to the physical manifestation and appearance of various emotional states.

- The Attitude and Atmosphere of Space—Background as Context

Students knowingly choose the elements of the composition to refine and extend meaning. They manipulate each (and every) element of a composition in order to heighten meaning. They show an awareness and use of proportion and scale, texture and pattern, light and shadow, clarity and obscurity, direction, shape, tonal emphasis and color, to increase expressive accuracy and depth.

- Clarity of Communication: The Role of the Audience in the Artistic Experience

Students use the visual arts to create substance for imaginary phenomena. They create a sense of believability for the absurd. As artists, they allow others to share in the power of their ideas and imaginings. They demonstrate knowing when a work is finished and expression is complete.

- The Illusion of Depth on a Two-Dimensional Surface

Students becoming cognizant of and creating shallow and deep space and an object's volume/mass on a two-dimensional surface. They identify the light source and its "effect" on all elements of a composition.

- Connections to Other Art Forms

Students recognize how the artistic potential and lessons of drama, literature, dance, and music shed light on visual expression.

- Student Investment/Behavior

- Promoting respectful and productive interactions among students
- Using the room, its tools and materials, appropriately
- Setting-up for the period's work and cleaning- up after oneself
- Using class time effectively and efficiently
- Approaching work with increasing self-motivation and independence
- Meeting deadlines
- Active participation during critiques and discussions
- Making a personal investment in the outcome of one's artwork, going beyond the minimum requirements of a project
- Creating personal meaning in the activity of art making
- Taking the time to fully express an idea, exceeding pre-conceived limitations

## **Sixth-Grade Drama**

In sixth -grade Drama, students will be introduced to improvisation and theatre games, and will use these tools to create theatre pieces from myths and stories.

Theatre games develop students' ability to work in an ensemble; they experience the give and take of sharing their own voices while making room for the voices of others. Students also learn to recognize their impulses and respond to them in a creative way. Story theatre work allows students to deeply study a text (in this case a story or myth), identify the major emotional events, and create a richly detailed theatre piece based on the text. The experiential nature of this class means that students are constantly playing and performing; by the end of the course they have expanded their abilities to vocally project and have achieved a level of assurance in speaking and performing before a group. At the end of the course, students will perform their story-theatre pieces.

## **Seventh Grade**

The goals of the art program in the seventh grade are to promote visual literacy, foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for the world of art, and provide students with the necessary tools for self-discovery. Students are encouraged to communicate their feelings and ideas through visual expression and to analyze, interpret, and evaluate their own work as well as the efforts of others.

Through a wide variety of activities and projects, students learn to define, recognize and use the various elements of art (painting, drawing, printmaking, and sculpture), and to employ principles of design (shape, line, form, color value, texture, and space). In doing so, they also develop important skills in the care and safe use of art supplies, materials, and equipment. Projects that have been done by classes in the past include figure drawing, portrait-painting, mask-making, and puppet construction.

## **Seventh-Grade Drama**

In seventh-grade Drama, students will continue their journey through the world of theatre, focusing on the actor's instrument (voice, speech, movement). This course also begins working with dramatic texts and exploring the role of theatre in society by looking at some plays that respond to devastating real-life events. Students will use writing as one of their tools to explore character.

Students will first write from their own perspective, moving in to writing from another's perspective and taking on that other's persona, to exploring characters in dramatic literature. Students will rehearse scenes in class, memorize them, and perform them. Focus falls with trying to understand a character from within, developing empathy for him or her, and to use our actor's instrument to convey that character to the class. Students will record their experiences in a journal, which will allow them to reflect on their artistic practice. At the end of the term, students present some of their scenes and monologues in an open workshop for the entire seventh grade.

## **Eighth-Grade Drama - Studio Theatre Workshop**

In eighth-grade Drama, we explore important periods in the history of theatre as well as various schools/styles of theatre (LeCoq and mask work, movement based theatre, Noh and Butoh, Greek drama, documentary theatre, sketch comedy) and allow them to inspire us as we create our own pieces. Students work from prompts to create short pieces each week, as they gather materials to develop their own solo pieces. Actively working from such diverse perspectives, the students gain an appreciation of the relevance of each style of theatre explored. Students rehearse and workshop their pieces in class, and learn to critique one another's work in a constructive manner. They record their experiences in a journal, which will allow them to gain insight into their own artistic practice, as well as reflect on the growth of others. At the end of the term, students perform short pieces they have written for the entire eighth grade. We will also make time for improv and theatre games as well!

# Home Economics and Sustainability

The Middle School Home Economics and Sustainability program offers quarter-long rotation classes to seventh- and eighth-grade students. All seventh-grade students will take the Home Economics and Sustainability course, which introduces students to cooking, sewing, personal finance, and principles of sustainability. Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, and apply this thinking to each area of the Home Economics curriculum.

Eighth-grade students have two options: eighth-grade Home Economics and Sustainability, a class that builds on all of the topics introduced in the seventh-grade class, and World Cuisines, a culinary journey around the world. In World Cuisines, students work collaboratively in a small group to complete progressively more challenging cooking labs every week. Students also investigate the cultural significance of different ingredients and flavors, as well as way to eat healthfully, equitably, and sustainably.

## Humanities

The Middle School Humanities curriculum explores how people in the past and present express themselves in thought, action, and in the arts. The program encourages students to engage in a deliberative process that leads them to intelligent and compassionate participation in the world. It aims to produce active citizens as well as thinkers—reflective and analytical young people who apply the habits and the insights they develop to their own decision-making. The Humanities curriculum integrates history and literature and uses elements of anthropology, sociology, art, music, geography, philosophy, law, and government to help students understand ancient history (sixth grade) and American history (seventh and eighth grades). By reading both non-fiction and fiction that parallel the topics and periods studied, students ask meaningful questions and make connections between what they study and what they experience. Additionally, various types of writing—such as research papers, analytical essays, and creative pieces including poetry, drama, journals, and personal narrative—further critical thinking and self-expression.

In considering the developmental needs of Middle School students, an interdisciplinary approach is more effective in teaching the skills and ideas of English and history than teaching these subjects independently. Students explore the structure of a novel, the literary techniques an author has used to achieve his or her message, and the broader context of that novel. Students work to analyze primary sources—written, visual, auditory, and objects—as well as appreciate their structure and aesthetic.

Discussion is an important component of the Humanities curriculum because it requires students to develop their capacities to reason, marshal evidence for their arguments, and defend their ideas orally. As a result, students must listen and respond to the ideas of other students. They recognize important issues and interests and engage in problem solving during discussions. While teacher-led discussions are integral to the program, student ownership of discussion grows progressively from small group, student-led discussion in the earlier grades to whole class, student-led discussion in seventh and eighth grades. Teachers carefully work with students to develop analytic questions and to hone students' listening and responding skills.

### Sixth-Grade Humanities

Sixth grade Humanities is an interdisciplinary course that uses discussion, projects, simulations, and guided research as a basis for studying language arts, literature, and ancient history. Students engage in an intellectual, creative, and artistic process, and work as individuals as well as in whole group and small group formats. The course covers four major interdisciplinary units-geography, Mesopotamia and/or other river valley civilizations, ancient Greece, and ancient China-that link literature selections with historical concepts. Students use the process approach to write a research paper and creative pieces.

Students in sixth grade learn historical perspective and chronology, political and economic structures of governance, the role of religion in human societies, philosophies of ancient peoples, and the foundations of democracy. The sixth-grade units allow students to explore and understand current world issues by providing a context and framework for

human behavior. For example, as they role-play the ancient Greek city-states, they encounter questions of gender and class equity, slavery and ownership, education, and the beginning of democracy. They also begin to understand the philosophies that influence modern political thought and action.

As they read, students begin to ask interpretive questions, notice significant details of plot, character, and setting, recognize figurative language, and acquire and use new vocabulary. They develop writing skills by summarizing both fiction and non-fiction pieces coherently, narrating personal experiences, writing short fictional pieces, organize prose into paragraphs and organizing paragraphs around topic sentences. Students practice note-taking strategies, organize notes into basic outlines, and learn and use correct bibliographic formats. Students continue to revise and self-edit their work with the guidance of teachers. In the revision process, students pay close attention to the details of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Discussion is an important component of the Humanities curriculum because it allows students to develop their capacities to reason. Students listen to and consider others' ideas, recognize and articulate similarities between ideas, support ideas with textual evidence, and carefully further discussion with ideas expressed at appropriate times.

### **Seventh-Grade Humanities**

The seventh grade Humanities program explores the theme of “social justice in a democratic society,” using primarily original sources drawn from American history and literature. Over the course of the year, students explore a range of themes and topics from a variety of perspectives. These thematic units are arranged in a chronological scope and sequence that provides numerous opportunities to integrate art, music, fiction, and non-fiction into a broad picture of each historical era’s place within the context of the developing identity of America. Throughout the year students will analyze maps and primary sources, build their vocabulary, develop their discussion and analysis skills using a student-led discussion model, and engage in project-based learning according to different units of study.

The seventh grade humanities course emphasizes the development of strong writing skills. In particular, students learn how to organize and support their ideas using examples and quotations from other sources and develop a better understanding of correct spelling, syntax, punctuation, and grammar. Students also practice the various stages of the drafting process—including pre-writing, outlining, peer editing, revising, and publishing their work in various forms—with an eye toward increased structural complexity and coherence. The course also focuses on skills, both in individual and group settings, involving reading comprehension, oral and written expression of technical information and opinions, and active listening. Techniques for developing these skills include journal writing, expository essays, personal narratives, creative poetry and short fiction, and a thesis-based research paper.

Units of study address the following subjects:

- Issues of identity, focusing on the individual, membership in different communities, and our nation as a whole
- The goals, strengths, and challenges faced by explorers and indigenous peoples during the age of exploration, including how various first encounters laid the groundwork for the future of America
- The development of the themes of liberty, justice, and human rights in American history
- The various risks, benefits, and responsibilities inherent in the idea of rebellion
- The experience and impact of westward expansion on different groups in our country
- The realities of slavery and the development of sectional tension as the trajectory toward the Civil War
- The legacy of the Civil War and the Great Migration upon the demographic, social, and political landscape of Chicago, and the relation of this era to the promises of self-determination and elemental human rights made in the country’s founding documents.

### **Eighth-Grade Humanities**

The eighth-grade Humanities program continues to focus and build on the critical thinking, listening, oral, and writing skills to which students were introduced in their earlier Middle School Humanities classes. It calls for a remarkable variety of types of expository and creative writing, including analytical essays, a research paper, journal

writing, and poetry. Classwork focuses on developing oral skills, including storytelling, poetry recitation and presentation. Classes work hard on effective listening and collaborative participation in discussion.

Students examine what history and stories have in common and how they differ. Fall Quarter begins with *Warriors Don't Cry* and the study of the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of school integration and the changes brought about by individuals unwilling to bend to societal norms of the time and instead choosing to fight for change. Constitutional issues and the battle between federal and state power sets the stage for the study of the Constitution. Students spend a great deal of time sifting through the language of the Constitution and working through its changing applications over time. Additionally, students examine the role of the citizen in society, how they can and have shaped and built this nation generation by generation. Students then read a novel set in the future, *Fahrenheit 451*, which allows them to explore questions about the role of technology in their lives and the relationship between the individual and society.

Following the Winter Break, students study the Reconstruction Period, engaging with many historical characters and their views of the changing nature of American society. The Gilded Age and Progressive Era follow, as they study the history of Chicago, the importance of its location and its founding as a city, the Great Fire of 1871, and the Columbian Exposition—the World's Fair of 1893 that took place in Jackson Park and on the Midway. Chicago serves as a lens through which important developments in early twentieth-century American life are examined, such as the mass movement of people from farms to the cities where they went to work in newly created factories (urbanization and industrialization), the labor movement, the arrival of millions of immigrants into the country from 1880 to 1920, and the effects of mass marketing and mass media on early twentieth-century American culture.

In the Spring quarter, students read novels that relate to movements and events in U.S. and world history. They begin with *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a German soldier's account of World War I, focusing on the War's effects on the individual and raising questions about "human nature." *Inherit the Wind*, a fictionalized account of the famous evolution controversy and the Scopes trial (1925), follows. Students finish the year with *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Harper Lee's novel about coming of age in the Depression-era South. There is a consistent examination of the choices individuals make that impact their lives, their surroundings and, at times, their nation.

Throughout the year, students read numerous short stories and primary source documents, both of which enhance reading comprehension and add to the ongoing conversation regarding the individual and society. Students also refine the mechanics of writing (grammar, punctuation, word usage, and sentence structure) and do a great amount of editing and revising of all written assignments. Classes also subscribe to *Upfront*, a middle school news and features magazine issued about twice monthly by *The New York Times*, which serves as a periodic focus of class discussions and presentations on current events.

Humanities at the eighth-grade level serves to help students examine their role in society and how they can shape the world in which they live. Ending the year with the trip to Washington, D.C. allows students to see what they have studied and reflect on all they have learned over the course of the year.

## Mathematics

### Pre-Algebra

The Pre-Algebra curriculum includes a thorough study of the arithmetic of rational numbers (integers, fractions, and decimals); an introduction to irrational numbers, radicals, and the Pythagorean theorem; a thorough study of rates, ratios, and percents; a substantial introduction to algebra, with an emphasis on properties of numbers and systematic procedures for solving equations; and a substantial introduction to geometry that includes symbolic notation, vocabulary, areas of polygons and circles, and surface areas and volumes of prisms and cylinders. Many other topics are introduced, including probability. Throughout, there is an emphasis on real-world applications.

As a supplement to the pre-Algebra program, each student receives an online account with ALEKS (Assessment and



Learning in Knowledge Spaces). ALEKS provides assessments and guided practice on topics of specific interest to each individual student. Students can use ALEKS to improve their basic skills, to master the course content more thoroughly, or to explore topics beyond the pre-Algebra curriculum.

Toward the end of Pre-Algebra, students are placed into one of two algebra courses: either a two-year sequence, Algebra IA and Algebra IB, which completes the study of algebra by the end of eighth grade, or an accelerated program, Algebra I, which completes the study of algebra during the seventh-grade year alone. The placement decision is based upon student grades, standardized test scores, and teacher recommendations.

## **Algebra**

The Algebra courses cover solving and graphing linear equations and inequalities, solving systems of equations by both algebraic and graphical methods, solving quadratic equations and graphing quadratic functions, solving exponential equations and graphing exponential functions, and operations with polynomials, radicals, rational expressions and equations, and exponents. Hands-on labs and investigations teach students to model data with algebraic functions and to move flexibly among various mathematical representations, including graphs, tables, and equations.

Students who successfully complete Algebra with an overall class average above 80% continue onto Geometry.

## **Geometry**

The Geometry course is a rigorous, proof-oriented study of Euclidean Plane Geometry. Students establish postulates that distinguish plane geometry from other possible geometries, write careful definitions, formulate conjectures, and verify those conjectures to establish theorems. Students become adept at both direct and indirect proof. Students study properties of isosceles triangles, perpendicular lines, parallel lines, kites, rhombuses, trapezoids, parallelograms, rectangles, and squares; congruent and similar triangles; figures in Euclidean space; the Pythagorean theorem; right triangle trigonometry; properties of circles; areas of plane figures; and surface areas and volumes of solid figures. The course is amply supplemented with hands-on constructions with straightedge and compass as well as the computer software Geometer's Sketchpad.

## **Music**

Music instruction is a Laboratory Schools requirement for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. One credit in Music is a requirement for graduation from University High School. Comprehensive general music instruction is the cornerstone of our music curriculum and program. Lower School music classes employ a variety of methodologies, particularly Orff and Kodaly.

All students participate in general music classes through fourth grade. At the end of fourth grade, students and families choose the focus of their fifth grade musical experience. In fifth grade, music department classes expand to include instruction in strings, winds, percussion, and general music. Instrumental instruction begins in similar instrument groups, and expands into full ensembles. Also, in fifth and sixth grade, a choral experience is offered as a component of the general music program. Sixth grade music instruction is a continuation of the program initiated in fifth grade. Seventh and eighth grade students continue in one of the following: band, choir, general music, or string orchestra.

University High School offerings include advanced placement music theory, jazz studies, music history and literature, and an electronic music studio class. Independent study courses are offered to high school students who have completed graduation requirements and wish to pursue studies beyond the scope of the department curriculum, subject to departmental approval. Non-credit offerings include various chamber ensembles for instrumental and vocal students.

The purpose of music education is to achieve self-growth and enjoyment by developing musicianship that will serve the whole person after schooling is complete. The specific objective of the Middle School music program is to inform and challenge students musically and provide them with meaningful music experiences in order to promote the

establishment of a solid and permanent relationship with music. Beginning in fifth grade, students select either instrumental or general music.

## **Sixth- through Eighth-Grade Instrumental Music**

Instrumental music is open to all students interested in learning to perform on a string, wind, or percussion instrument. Each successive year's participation is dependent upon the successful completion of the previous year. Decisions concerning placement take into account performing ability on an instrument, student needs, and requirements of the ensemble. Emphasis is on the development of skills for performing in a group as opposed to training solo performers. The goal of the instrumental music classes is to develop the comprehensive musicianship of each student by playing, studying, and analyzing music literature from a variety of historical periods and styles. The instrumental ensembles each perform several times during the year.

Students are instructed in certain common skills and subject areas at each grade level, without regard to the particular instrument being studied. The main skills and subjects are listed below by grade:

### **Sixth-Grade Instrumental Music**

- Instrumental technique

Care of the instrument; correct posture and playing position; continued development of tone production and quality; developing endurance and range; developing technical facility

- Music reading and theory

Expanding the vocabulary of basic rhythmic notations; continued development of pitch notations; introducing full ensemble music; engaging in written exercises in music theory

- Interpretative skills and creativity

Continued work on slurs, phrasing, articulations, and dynamics; the introduction of terms related to tempi

- Music literature, repertoire, and history

Performing music of various styles, periods, and cultures

- Solo and group performance skills

Performing individually and in small groups; performing ad hoc informal concerts as well as two formal large-group concerts. (Attendance at all concerts is a course requirement).

- Aesthetic enjoyment of music

Attending concerts or live performances; listening to recordings; and playing for fun at home or school

### **Seventh-Grade Instrumental Music**

- Instrumental technique

Care of the instrument; continued development of correct posture and playing position; refining tone production and quality; continued development of endurance and range; intermediate-level work on technical facility

- Music reading and theory

Continuing to expand the vocabulary of rhythmic notations; introducing the vocabulary of chromatic pitch notation; performing more complex ensemble music requiring greater independence; engaging in written exercises in music theory as needed

- Interpretative skills and creativity

Discussing and applying accepted interpretations of various styles of music; performing with expression and technical accuracy at the intermediate level

- Music literature, repertoire, and history; aesthetic enjoyment of music

Expanding exposure to music of various styles, periods, and cultures

- Solo and group performance skills

Performing intermediate-level music independently and in small groups with expression and technical accuracy, and performing two formal large-group concerts. (Attendance at all concerts is a course requirement.)

### **Eighth-Grade Instrumental Music**

- Instrumental technique

Care of the instrument; continued development of correct posture and playing position; continued refinement of tone production and quality; continued development of endurance and range; advanced-level work on technical facility

- Music reading and theory

Introducing the vocabulary of advanced rhythmic notations; expanding the vocabulary of chromatic pitch notations; refining the performance of complex ensemble music requiring greater independence; engaging in written exercises in music theory as needed

- Interpretative skills and creativity

Continuing to discuss and apply accepted interpretations of various styles of music; performing with expression and technical accuracy more advanced-level music

- Music literature, repertoire, and history

Continuing to expand exposure to music of various styles, periods, and cultures

- Solo and group performance skills

Performing more advanced-level music independently and in small groups with expression and technical accuracy; performing two formal large-group concerts. (Attendance at all concerts is a course requirement).

- Aesthetic enjoyment of music

Attending concerts or live performances; listening to recordings; attending recreational musical performances; integrating interdisciplinary musical performances as appropriate

## **Expectations for Students in the Instrumental Music Program**

- Be on time for class. Unexcused tardiness may impact a student's grade.
- Each student must bring instrument, music, book, and pencil to all music classes. Music, book, and pencil must be on music stand.
- Vocal and instrumental courses are cooperative participation performance courses, which require individual and group performance and participation.
- Attendance at concerts is a course requirement. Unexcused absence may impact a student's grade.
- If a student is in school but incapable of class participation due to medical issues, the student is expected to attend music class with the instrument and music, and participate as fully as the medical condition will allow.
- Music that is passed out to students remains the property of the Laboratory Schools. Students are encouraged to mark music with appropriate musical notation in pencil. Loss, destruction, or inappropriate markings of music may result in replacement fees and/or grade adjustment.
- Students must have all necessary supplies at all music classes. Supplies include: Neck straps Shoulder rest Cork grease Mouthpiece Rosin Swab Folders & music Pencil Valve oil Mutes 3 good reeds Slide oil Drumsticks
- Students will be assigned an instrument storage locker for the secure storage of the instrument while it is at school. Students are expected to lock their lockers at the end of each class. Students are responsible for lost band locker locks. Large instruments will be assigned space in a locked storage room.
- If an instrument is not working, please see a music teacher for an assessment of the instrument to determine the extent of the problem and need for a loaner instrument before any repair is initiated.
- All instrument cases must be clearly identified with a heavy duty name tag with the student's name and contact information clearly displayed on the nametag.
- Regular home practice is an expectation of all instrumental classes.

## **Seventh-and Eighth-Grade Music Workshop**

### **Seventh Grade**

This class is designed for students who are looking for a musical experience other than our large performing groups like band, choir, and orchestra. The Workshop explores music from a variety of angles, teaches about its history, how composers work, and how all those different individual elements are put together to create songs, symphonies, string quartets, and more. Students will learn the basic rules of music theory, form, and what makes a blues song work. We will also explore the history and features of musical instruments that surround us every day such as guitars, pianos, violins, and more. The class will be very hands-on, with songwriting, composition assignments, and music making.

### **Eighth Grade**

Much like the seventh-grade Music Workshop, eighth graders continues to explore music in a variety of ways, again with an emphasis on composition. Eighth graders work with a composer for an in-depth, ten-week project. Resources

such as Garage Band will be put to use, and students even build their own instruments. The study of music history continues by delving into two great American art forms: jazz and blues. Homework assignments help reinforce what is learned in the classroom, and many University of Chicago resources are utilized as well. At the conclusion of their eighth-grade year, students will have examined music as performers, composers, instrument builders, and writers, and be prepared to take any of our High School music classes.

### **Seventh- and Eighth-Grade Chorus**

Through a repertoire of age-appropriate and challenging music, students engage in active music making while acquiring the skills necessary for performance. Vocal technique is the foundation to good singing and is practiced daily. Attention is given to proper balance, breath control, and breathing, and tone production. Additionally, note-reading skills are stressed as an important component of musicianship.

Activities to promote comprehensive musicianship include exercises involving rhythm and intervals taken from the context of the particular music being studied. Warm-up activities are used to prepare students mentally, physically, and vocally for singing. Choral scores are provided for each student. Elements of score-reading relating to dynamics, tempo, articulation, expression and form are addressed as they occur.

## **Physical Education**

The goal of the Physical Education program is to provide students with the foundation for a lifetime of healthful pursuits. The curriculum encourages students to develop physical skills, coordination, and fitness. It also teaches them the concepts related to health and fitness enhancement and how to apply team strategies in both competitive and non-competitive environments. Students will encounter age-appropriate activities designed to promote the cognitive, psychomotor and affective development of students in team, individual, aquatic, fitness, and rhythmic experiences. The emphasis is placed on basic skill development and organized games. Units range from three to four weeks in length and are designed to address the fitness needs, developmental process and potential skills and interests of our students. Our program is designed to meet, and in most cases exceed, the national standards set by the United States Department of Education, the state standards set by the Illinois Department of Education, and to prepare students to be successful in University High School physical education program.

### **Sixth-Grade Physical Education**

Age-appropriate activities are designed to promote the psychomotor and affective development of students in team, individual, aquatic and rhythmic experiences. The emphasis is placed on basic skill development and low organized games. Units ranging from two to four weeks in length are conducted in soccer, tennis, basketball, dance, tumbling, swimming, gymnastics, floor hockey, track, softball, and net games.

### **Seventh- and Eighth-Grade Physical Education**

Age-appropriate activities are designed to promote the psychomotor and affective development of students in team, individual, aquatic, and rhythmic experiences. The emphasis is placed on the development of more advanced skills and strategy in more highly organized activities and competitive situations. Units are conducted on soccer, touch football, tennis, volleyball, basketball, swimming, gymnastics, and softball. Additionally, seventh graders also participate in aerobics, floor hockey, and track. Eighth graders also participate in dance, weight training, and team handball.

We recognize that students who are competing at a competitive level are often specializing in a particular sport and may have a very time due to intensive competition and training schedules. We believe that in order for our students to benefit from our experience-centered, rigorous, and well-rounded education, they should be fully present and involved in our school community.

# Science

## Sixth-Grade Science

The objective of the sixth-grade science program is to teach skills and processes utilized in the study of science through the study of life science concepts. Laboratory work is carried out with a partner. Other work is generally done on an individual basis.

The following skills and processes are covered during the year: model building (as to the structure of cells, and to explain the interactions between populations); formulating a hypothesis; identifying variables; interpreting and graphing data; mapping concepts; and utilizing the metric system in measurements.

Units of study consist of:

- Cells: An introduction to microscope work and cell components. Students will be involved in constructing a nine-foot cell complete with organelles.
- Body Systems: This unit will include dissection of individual organs, an overview of a fetal pig dissection, and an owl pellet. Systems will include the musculo-skeletal system, digestion and nutrition, respiration, circulation, and reproduction.
- Ecology, Ecosystems and Biomes: This unit will cover biotic and abiotic factors in the environment, succession with a trip to the Indiana Dunes, population dynamics, and biomes.

## Seventh-Grade Science

The seventh-grade Earth Science course is designed to be a systems-based approach that investigates interactions within and between the spheres of the Earth. This hands-on course explores the relationships between the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon; the atmosphere and hydrosphere as they apply to weather and climate; and the geosphere and the biosphere. Students will investigate scientific principles of energy and matter as they apply to oceanic, atmospheric, and geologic systems. In doing so, they will discover that these systems, including the biosphere, are interconnected to create the dynamic living planet.

## Eighth-Grade Science

The eighth-grade Physical Science course provides students with a rigorous experience in physical science using hands-on design challenges to measure and analyze the properties of the physical world. These properties will then be described conceptually, graphically, and mathematically. Basic units will cover laws of motion, forces energy, work, electronics and an introduction to chemistry through gas laws. The course has a substantial hands-on and building component. Students will be using a variety of tools including saws and soldering irons to complete group and individual projects. The iterative process of design, construction, and often reconstruction will play an important role in the student experience.

# World Languages

The objectives of the World Language Department of the Laboratory Schools are to impart an appreciation for the languages and cultures taught, and to prepare students to communicate well in the target languages. The teachers in the World Language Department use a variety of methods and techniques to accomplish these objectives, depending on the developmental stage, linguistic level, and learning styles of the students. In teaching younger students, the emphasis is on understanding and speaking the language; gradually, reading and writing are incorporated into the curriculum. World language classes are primarily conducted in the target language and effective communication in a variety of settings is the primary goal. The Language laboratory also is used for enhancing aural comprehension and spoken production

At the Laboratory Schools, language study begins in the third grade. All students study one foreign language (French, German, Mandarin Chinese or Spanish) from the third grade through the eighth grade to attain linguistic competence. At the high school level, students may change languages or add a second foreign language. Latin is also offered at the high school level. In the early grades, appreciation of the language is encouraged through activities that include songs, games, skits, and the celebration of cultural events and holidays. In the Middle School, textbooks and readers are implemented in order to facilitate a systematic approach to language learning. In the Middle and High Schools the curriculum increasingly introduces grammatical concepts while deepening the students' appreciation of the various cultures through the study of art, film, and literature.

The World Language Department has a carefully articulated curriculum. The curriculum allows flexibility for individual cultural projects that teachers may wish to add. However, the expectation is that all students at a particular level gain mastery of the same basic material, allowing them to proceed to the next level successfully.

## **The Athletic Program**

The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools' athletic programs support a no-cut policy, based on the belief that all students should have the opportunity to experience and contribute to a team, regardless of skill level. Having a no-cut policy has many positive attributes, although there are some limitations, particularly in team sports such as basketball and volleyball, where large teams are not always easy to manage and issues surrounding playing and practice time can occur. Coaches are sensitive to this issue and work with their teams to create a positive experience for all participants. While the no-cut policy refers to the opportunity to join a team, it does not guarantee playing time. Ultimately, the benefits of providing students with an equal opportunity to join a team, or a no-cut policy, far outweigh the disadvantages.

Student athletes are expected to attend all practice sessions (typically 1.5 hours) and contests. Absences must be excused by the coach and detailed in a note. Student athletes who are not at school or do not participate in their Physical Education classes are not allowed to participate that same day in any athletic contest or practice.

Student athletes are expected to maintain a Satisfactory (S) or above in all classes. Student athletes who are struggling to meet this expectation may be asked to not participate in the athletic activity for a length of time until satisfactory academic improvement has been made.

### **Middle School Team Sports**

FALL	WINTER	SPRING
Boys Soccer	Boys Basketball	Girls Soccer
Girls Volleyball	Girls Basketball	Coed Baseball
Coed Cross Country		Coed Track

Cross Country is open to all Middle School students, while all other teams are open to seventh- and eighth-grade students. Sixth-grade students are invited to join the track team in the spring. If there is a low number of participants, sixth-grade students may be invited to participate on a team.

For more information about the Athletic Programs, please visit the Athletic Department's webpage found at: <http://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/athletics/index.aspx>.

## **Clubs and Activities**

## Student Clubs

Clubs and activities depend largely on student interest and initiative. The following clubs and activities are a sampling of current offerings: Asian Students Association, Black Students Association, Christian Students Association, Middle School Diplomacy Group, History Club, Humanities Club, *Jammed Locker*, Jewish Students Association, Science Club, and Student Council.

Depending on student interest, additional clubs and activities may be added once the school year begins.

Specific dates and times for the clubs and activities listed below are available in the Middle School office. For an updated listing of activities and meeting schedules, please contact Allison Jones, Middle School Assistant Principal and Dean of Students.

## Math Team

All middle-school students desiring additional challenge in mathematics are invited to attend Math Team. Each grade level has its own math team and coach, and meets once per week at lunch. Students practice more challenging problems to prepare for various math contests. Lab School administers the AMC 8 math contest in November, the IML math contest in February, and three individual and three group contests sponsored by the ICTM in December, February, and April. Contests are open to all middle school students.

In addition, students may participate in our MATHCOUNTS program, which also meets once per week. Students prepare for the Sprint, Target, Team, and Countdown contests administered at the School level. The top ten students compete at the Chapter Competition in late February and may advance to the State Competition in March and possibly to the National competition in May.

# Service Learning Program

## Mission

The University of Chicago Laboratory Middle School Community Service Learning Program is designed to provide opportunities for sixth- through eighth-grade students to become active participants in volunteer activities throughout communities in the Chicago area. The program is also designed to provide opportunities for classroom teachers to assist students in seeing and understanding the natural and logical associations of what is taught via the classroom curriculum and beyond the classroom into the general community. Our program fosters a sense of responsibility to our community. We engage in service and reflection that instill the value of providing time, effort, and resources to others in pursuit of a more just society.

Why we are committed to service learning:

Service learning can help make our students better learners and better citizens. Service learning:

- Enriches classroom learning by applying students' knowledge and skills in the service of a diverse community
- Strengthens the middle school community by working together for common goals
- Incorporates reflection, which in turn develops students' awareness of their power to effect social change
- Offers reciprocal benefits to our students and the community

## Vision

The combination of service and learning will help to further develop civic-minded Middle School students who will continue to learn the value of giving of oneself to others through community service. The program will not only allow students to work cooperatively in peer groups, but it will also provide opportunities for them to connect with persons who are younger and older than their peers. To that end, the following four objectives will be used as guidelines for activities and experiences:

- HEALTH: To raise money and participate in activities in support of research to help eradicate diseases such as childhood diabetes and cancer.
- HUNGER: To raise money and participate in activities to assist in feeding the hungry at the local, national

and international levels.

- ENVIRONMENT: To participate in efforts to preserve, protect, and improve local park district areas, Chicago River, and Lake Michigan. To enhance re-cycle initiatives.
- ART: To engage in fine and performing arts designed to enhance the quality of life for others.

## **Participation of Middle School Students at Lab**

The following list indicates the many ways Middle School students have provided service to the community:

- Designing holiday cards for patients at The University of Chicago Hospital (6<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Packing food at the Greater Chicago Food Depository (8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Serving food at The Living Room Café (8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Reading to and assisting Lower School students—Reading Buddies (8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Raising money and walking in the School Walk for Diabetes (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Collecting food, clothing, and toys for distribution to needy families through an approved agency (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Assisting at Lincoln Park Zoo (8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Providing stewardship activities such as restoration with Friends of the Chicago River and The Chicago Park District (7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Participating in the Race Against Hunger (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders)

According to Learn and Serve America, a program created under the National and Community Service Act of 1990, Service-Learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activities will change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.

## **Learning and Counseling Services**

The following services of the Counseling and Learning Department are available for all of our students and families.

### **Learning Services**

The Middle School Learning Coordinators; strive to help all students improve their academic performance. In addition to providing direct service when appropriate, the Learning Coordinators work with students and their families, counselors, faculty and administrators in The Schools to facilitate appropriate support. The Learning Consultants may also make referrals to independent professionals and organizations that provide services, which support the work of the Laboratory Schools. Such services may include diagnostic testing, remediation of specific learning disabilities, consultation with medical professionals and other therapists, and tutor referrals.

### **Counseling Services**

#### **GROUP SUPPORT:**

Students can sometimes help each other by working in small groups that are led by a counselor. Group support gives students the opportunity to share ideas and to help one another use these ideas to resolve their concerns.

#### **INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT:**

Individual counseling is provided for students who have a variety of educational and personal concerns in such areas as interpersonal relationships, family issues, academic issues, substance use, and loss and grief.

#### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT:**

Counselors are available to the Middle School community as a resource for consultation and referral.



### **Requests for Diagnostic Information**

When a therapist, doctor, or diagnostician does work with a student, a request is often made to gather written information or rating scales from the child's teachers. It is the policy of The Middle School that all rating scales and written requests for information as part of an evaluation for learning issues be processed through The Director of Student Services and the Learning Consultants. The Learning Consultants will distribute the materials and then submit the completed documents directly to the requesting evaluator(s).

The goals of the Learning and Counseling Department are to:

- Support the school experience to become an integrated one for each student by acknowledging that a significant relationship exists between a student's learning process, academic performance, and social, familial, and emotional well-being.
- Assist students in developing knowledge of self, their strengths and weaknesses, and a sense of self-worth.
- Guide students in developing organizational and problem solving skills.
- Promote student development and achievement through assisting students in understanding their own individual strengths, challenges, and their unique way of learning.
- Collaborate with parents, faculty, administrators, other educators, and resource people to help all students move toward an appropriate and successful educational experience.

### **Learning Services**

Students who are experiencing learning difficulties may benefit from a more in-depth look at their strengths and weaknesses. The Middle School Learning Coordinators are available to work in partnership with families and students in this process. The Learning Coordinators serve as sources of referral for students and their families to secure assistance from programs in the School as well as from individuals and organizations outside the School.

The Learning and Counseling Department works to achieve its goals by:

- Obtaining information from students, teachers, and families
- Reviewing a student's cumulative records
- Observing a student in class
- Meeting with students and families
- Assisting in the development of a planned partnership between home and school to enhance each child's school success

### **Referrals**

- Middle School counselors and the learning consultant serve as sources of referral for students and their families to secure assistance from programs in the Laboratory Schools as well as from individuals and organizations outside the Schools.
- Counselors maintain a resource book containing various referral options.
- Counselors interview prospective tutors and maintain a list of tutors, which is made available to families by request.

## **Library**

Rowley Library participates in the educational mission of the Laboratory Schools by supporting and enriching the Middle and High School curricula. By selecting and facilitating access to a diverse body of materials, the Library endeavors to meet the individual educational and recreational reading needs of students, faculty, and staff. In addition, through communication, instruction, and collaboration with faculty, the Library aims to integrate information literacy skills more fully with subject areas in the curriculum. The Library is committed to defending intellectual freedom, encouraging curiosity and inquiry, and to building a school-wide community of readers and learners.

Rowley Library holds two separate libraries within its walls: University High School Library and the Middle School Library. The Library faculty includes two High School librarians and two Middle School librarians. The library staff consists of a full-time library technology coordinator, two full-time library assistants, and three part-time work-study students from the University of Chicago.

Rowley Library's collection reflects both its support of the Laboratory Schools curricula and its commitment to selecting materials that represent a diversity of subject matter, formats, and viewpoints. Librarians employ both review journals and the input of faculty and students to research materials for the collection. Rowley Library is fully automated with a collection of 50,000 books, videotapes, Playaways, and DVDs; 113 periodicals; 7 newspapers; a microfilm collection; a web-based catalog, as well as online reference and periodical services. Students have access to the full collection of electronic databases available through the University of Chicago. In addition, the collection includes priceless historical materials that would not otherwise be available to students. While actively expanding electronic resources, the library nevertheless maintains a strong commitment to collecting, maintaining, and promoting the value of print resources.

The Middle School portion of Rowley Library serves fifth through eighth grades. Located in the east section of the library, the area is staffed by librarians whose goal is to help Middle School students become effective library users. Students are instructed on how to access the online patron catalog and locate books on shelves, utilize both print and online reference materials, access Internet resources, and be familiar with both search techniques and applications. Throughout the Middle School years, students are encouraged to read for pleasure through reading programs, book talks, author visits, readers' advisory, and specialized reading lists.

Sixth grade students have bi-monthly library classes organized through their advisories. During library classes, specific research skills are taught and students are given the opportunity to select books for personal enjoyment. Librarians hold book talks that relate to both curricular needs and reading enjoyment; these sessions are held in the library and in middle school classrooms.

Seventh and eighth-grade students visit the library on an as-needed basis. Advisors and teachers may choose to schedule their classes for book talks, storytelling, book selection, and recreational reading at any time. Book talks that relate to curricular needs are also presented in individual classrooms. Students are encouraged to visit the library on their own for pleasure reading.