



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO
LABORATORY SCHOOLS



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Middle School **PROGRAM OF STUDIES**

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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 Program

The Middle School Program is based upon the following principles:

1. All students at a particular grade level should have a set of common curricular and co-curricular experiences.
2. Each student's critical thinking and inquiry skills should be nurtured and fostered.
3. Each student should develop the ability to make connections through analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of evidence.
4. Each student should develop their own agency and voice; feel a sense of belonging; and understand that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential values of our community.

The Middle School is committed to forming an overall curriculum for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students that is creative, developmentally appropriate, and engaging. Our curriculum fosters critical thinking and collaborative work, provides active learning experiences for our students, and encourages students to become increasingly independent learners. The teaching styles of Middle School faculty represent a rich variety of conceptual, pedagogical, and philosophical approaches. Working within the framework of their departments and in close collaboration with grade-level teaching partners, 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, and individual personal development. 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, we place a strong emphasis 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. Norms of behavior are reinforced in each classroom and through grade-level and school-wide assemblies.

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. Middle School faculty are committed to ongoing reflection and refinement of the program.

Grade-Level Overviews

Sixth grade marks a transition from Lower School to Middle School, with students gaining more independence in their academics and other activities. Students have an advisor rather than a homeroom teacher, and students move between classrooms for each subject.

The advisory program is the heart of the sixth-grade experience. Advisories meet daily for morning meetings and weekly for longer sessions, students build friendships with a small set of classmates and develop a close, supportive relationship with one teacher. Monthly themes for advisory lessons include executive functioning, self-awareness, digital citizenship, and responsible decision making.

In sixth grade, students take humanities, math, science, world language, music, physical education, and four out of the five rotation classes that occur for a nine week period and rotate. The five sixth-grade rotation courses are: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Computer Science, Home Economics, Art, and Drama.

Outside of the classroom, sixth-grade students have more freedom than before. They eat lunch in the cafe with peers, participate in clubs during the lunch period, and may join school sports teams after school.

sixth-grade students typically take several field trips to destinations such as the Oriental Institute, Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, and the Indiana Dunes National

Lakeshore. Students also travel to Camp MacLean in Wisconsin for a five-day overnight camp experience in May.

By **seventh grade**, students have become familiar with the Middle School program and are ready for greater challenges, more independence, and a deeper level of thinking and engagement with complex ideas.

The seventh-grade program focuses on helping students become effective self-advocates. In their academic classes and in advisory, seventh-grade students take increasing responsibility for managing their experience as students. Students lead their student-parent-teacher conferences, and are eligible to take on leadership roles in Student Council and other student-run organizations. Seventh grade students have more input on selecting their rotation classes.

Seventh-grade teachers reinforce the executive functioning skills introduced in sixth grade, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining balance between a variety of commitments. Seventh grade is often a year when students begin to make choices about which commitments to prioritize, and taking a central role in understanding and managing the totality of their commitments becomes more of an emphasis in this pivotal year through the use of their planner and through communicating frequently with their teachers, coaches, parents/guardians, and other adults in their lives. As students develop through this midpoint stretch of Middle School, the academic program becomes more complex in age-appropriate ways. Seventh-grade students are encouraged to take risks and strive for their personal best in the classroom, and teachers provide scaffolds and safety nets to help students gain confidence in their voices and abilities. Teachers and advisors also use the CASEL framework to foster social and emotional growth. The advisory curriculum includes lessons on sexual health, media literacy, digital citizenship, and other developmentally appropriate topics while also providing room for communal responses to emergent issues and opportunities within small groups and across the grade.

The class-wide field trips also reflect student readiness to take on more complex challenges. Throughout the year, students engage in service learning both on and off campus. In the spring, students attend an outdoor camp. Seventh-grade camp focuses on team building and working through personal challenges for four days at the outdoor education facility Pretty Lake Adventure Centre in Mattawan, Michigan.

Eighth grade is the culmination of the middle school years. This year is structured such that students take on greater independence as the year progresses, preparing themselves to transition to high school. In eighth grade, students continue to fine tune their time management skills, self-advocacy, as well as take on many leadership roles, particularly in activities, clubs, and the Middle School Student Council. The year ends with a class trip to

Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., which includes visits to many national monuments, museums, and historical sites. The eighth-grade trip allows students the opportunity to come together, to celebrate, and to reflect on their Middle School years.

The structure of the eighth-grade academic program changes only slightly from seventh grade, with expanded rotation offerings in world cuisines, service learning, computer science, and fine arts. Programming on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) topics in eighth grade are facilitated through advisory workshops scheduled throughout the academic year.

Advisory

The advisory program serves as one of the philosophical cornerstones of the Middle School at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. It provides children with a smaller community within the broader institution where they are known and included. It creates a space for every student to build a relationship with a Lab adult who comes to understand and support them as a whole child. It provides advisors with a community of colleagues who work together to develop a program that is responsive to the needs of their separate advisories, the advisories of a grade level, and of the division as a whole. The advisory program connects students, teachers, and families together in a web of relationships designed to help students thrive with gradually increasing independence during this challenging and wonderful period of their development.

Each advisory consists of a group of twelve to sixteen students that meets with an advisor in a consistent space on a regular schedule. Rather than looping with the same group of students and same advisor, advisory groups are created anew each year. With rare exceptions, each advisor also sees their advisees in class throughout the week as their subject teacher.

Advisories meet for the first ten minutes of each day to take attendance, go through the school bulletin, and talk through any logistical issues for that day such as assemblies, field trips, or special schedules. Middle School advisories also meet twice a week for a longer block of time. In these longer 45–60 minute periods advisory groups work on curricular goals developed by their grades' advisor team. They learn about and engage with issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice; pursue service learning opportunities; practice executive functioning skills relating to time management and successful studentship; and explore a wide array of topics related to health and wellness. Advisory groups also use these longer periods to build community by playing games, going for walks, studying as a large group, and playing together outside. The curriculum balances a mixture of grade-wide activities and lessons alongside a significant amount of autonomy for advisors and their groups to pursue their

interests and respond to issues and opportunities as they arise. Advisory groups form the most fundamental community building block within the Middle School. They eat lunch together with their advisories during the first week of school. Students sit with their advisories at assemblies. They attend field trips together. They are the beginning of every student's day and the most frequent, consistent aspect of a student's time in Middle School.

Outside of the structured whole-advisory periods, the advisory program functions through frequent collaborative communications between the advisors, students, teachers, and families, with the student taking an increasingly central voice in this dialogue as they advance through the Middle School. The advisor serves as a point person for communication between families and the school, providing a hub between the various sources of support on the school side, including students' teachers, the counseling team, and the learning coordinators. The advisor also serves as their advisees' advocate, providing immediate support while also gradually helping them grow in their ability to navigate the Middle School with increasing confidence and independence. In all three grades, parent-teacher conferences consist of families meeting with their child's advisor. Advisors coach their advisees on how to understand and share their strengths, challenges, successes, and goals not only in terms of academic achievement but also in terms of the whole picture of their lives, including extracurricular commitments and their health and wellness.

The advisor's role shifts as students progress through Middle School. Sixth-grade advisors help with the transition from a homeroom model to a division with a different structure and different expectations. Seventh-grade advisors guide students through the development of skills and mindsets useful for academic but also social and emotional growth. Eighth-grade advisors help students step into the role of leaders of the Middle School while preparing for the transition to high school. The program culminates with students marching at eighth-grade graduation by advisory groups, with eighth-grade advisors presenting personally chosen books to their students as a way of marking the end of their students' Middle School experience.

Computer Science

The Middle School Computer Science program guides students to practice and develop habits of creative and collaborative problem-solving. Students are introduced to Computer Science as a way of critical thinking, applicable to a wide range of contexts. Through a problem-based curriculum, students explore a range of challenges and lessons exploring fundamental Computer Science skills and concepts.

Students learn by doing, constructing their understanding in collaboration with their peers. Each project is designed to be accessible at many levels, to accommodate students with prior experience, and to motivate students towards discovery, achievement, and engagement.

Although courses will cover specific programming languages from block-based to text-based, the focus across the Middle School Computer Science program is on learning concepts that can apply not only to Computer Science, but to general problem solving and critical thinking strategies. Students will be able to differentiate between being consumers of technology and the challenge and joy of creating technology to solve problems of increasing magnitude.

In conjunction with the exploration of Computer Science, the courses are designed to produce secondary outcomes for Middle School students such as increasing confidence when dealing with complexity, persistence when working with difficult problems, tolerance for ambiguity coupled with demand for precision, the ability to deal with open ended problems, etc.

COURSES

Sixth-Grade Computer Science

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the fundamental ideas of Computer Science and to promote the development of logical reasoning, algorithmic thinking, structured problem solving, and digital literacy. Projects are designed to highlight the connections between computational thinking concepts and mathematics. Sixth-grade students practice and apply mental processes (e.g. abstraction, algorithm design, decomposition, pattern recognition, etc.) in their project work. They learn about sequencing, selection, arithmetic and logical operators, the coordinate plane, randomness, variables, loops, conditionals, data structures, functions, etc. Project work is completed on cloud-based platforms such as Google Sheets (spreadsheets), Scratch (hosted by MIT), and CS Academy (hosted by CMU).

Seventh/Eighth-Grade Computer Science

The goal of this course is to provide a more in-depth investigation and experience with computing concepts and skills, collaboration, problem-solving, pattern-finding, and abstract thinking. Through programming projects, students will be challenged to design algorithms and code solutions to a variety of computational problems using an iterative process.

Programming problems will combine mathematical and logical concepts, introducing topics such as Boolean logic, functions, and searching and sorting algorithms.

Seventh-Grade 3D Printing

The goal of this course is to explore 3D design, geometry and additive fabrication through a challenge-based sequence of projects using computer-aided design (CAD) and slicing software and 3D printer hardware. Students will learn to use 3D modeling tools (extrude, thicken,

revolve, splines, splits, transforms, boolean operators, etc.) together with different slicing settings to design and create artifacts that integrate with themes of sustainability (i.e. planter pots), geometric puzzles, social/emotional awareness, and home economics (cookie cutters, for example).

Eighth-Grade Robotics

The goal of this course is to introduce students to coding and design of robots through a structured sequence of programming and engineering challenges emphasizing real-world contexts. The projects are designed to get students thinking about the patterns and structure of not just robotics, but also programming and problem-solving more generally. The curriculum includes videos, animations, step-by-step lessons, and hands-on challenges designed to foster computational thinking skills and problem solving strategies. Students learn to build and program the LEGO® MINDSTORMS EV3 robot to complete challenges focussed on movement, turning, sensors (ultrasonic, light, touch, and gyro), program flow, loops, decisions, conditionals, line following, etc. Emphasis on persistence, debugging, trial and error, pseudocode, and creativity promotes successful and innovative approaches to a wide range of assignments and challenges.

CLUBS

Robotics Club

The Middle School Robotics Club meets weekly after school throughout the entirety of the academic year providing students with opportunities to construct programmable robots using motors, sensors, wheels, and axles, etc. Teams work to design and program robots to compete in the FIRST LEGO League Challenge tournament testing modifications to improve robot performance and solve problems. The Middle School Robotics Club promotes the application of critical thinking skills in an atmosphere that promotes social interaction, cooperation, and group problem solving.

Computer Science Club

The Middle School Computer Science Club meets weekly after school during the school year to provide a valuable hands-on learning experience for Middle School students to integrate computational thinking, programming, mathematics, teamwork, and problem solving. Students will have an opportunity to compete in the annual American Computer Science League competition. Students work on challenging puzzles, logic games, CS problem sets, and ACLS competition practice materials. The Middle School Computer Science Club aims to demonstrate how exciting computer science, programming, collaboration and mathematics can be while solving problems through inquiry, critical thinking, and creativity.

Fine Arts

At the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, visual arts classes in first grade through twelfth grade and drama classes in sixth grade through twelfth grade present art as a language with unique expressive powers. The acquisition of these powers enables students to fulfill the Laboratory Schools' mission. The language of art also challenges students to fuse emotion and intuition with intellect. Through the study of art, each student is encouraged to value, respond to, and further develop, their 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 their 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 developing of skills necessary for image making.

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, 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 Art

The central themes and foci of the Middle School visual arts program are:

- **Honing Observational Skills**

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 with peers and their teacher.

- **Skill and Subtlety in Recording Observations**

Students review and extend their skills and increase their artisanship 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 their World**

Students investigate the emotions of mythological characters and connect these with their 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 become cognizant of and create 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.

The sixth-grade visual arts program offers opportunities for students to further their study of art as a means of self-expression, experimentation, nurturing imagination, and encouraging play. Visual art students attend a rotation in which they build upon their creative skills and engage in the studio spaces as young artists. Our art classes are engaging environments where students work independently alongside their peers discussing their work, process and ideas. Art teachers are intentional in their unit planning in terms of projects, and when presenting

artists assuring they represent the student body at large affording students the opportunity to see themselves represented in the contemporary art world. Our program's focus on providing equitable, inclusive and diverse learning opportunities for students are aligned with Lab's school diversity, equity, and inclusion; and social-emotional learning goals.

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 and further their means for self-expression. 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.

The eighth-grade visual arts offering expands to include advanced digital media work and an exploration into three-dimensional and sculptural artwork. The addition of these two visual arts options to the Middle School fine arts program also serves to prepare students for entry-level visual arts courses in the high school.

Sixth-Grade Visual Arts Level 1

Sixth-grade students in Visual Arts Level 1 are given two large assignments during this art rotation. They focus their art-making skills on rendering a two-dimensional image of their making and translating it into a three-dimensional form or sculpture using various materials. Students are encouraged to build and articulate an imaginative form while manipulating its construction, requiring them to resolve challenges posed by the assignments. Students actively use the art studio, interact with peers, participate in dialogue about their work, and learn about artists and sculpture as an art form.

Seventh-Grade Principles of Design

Through a wide variety of studio activities and artmaking projects, students in Principles of Design learn to define, recognize, and purposefully use the elements of art, and employ principles of design tenets in their artwork. In doing so, they hone valuable rendering skills when articulating their ideas. Issues of identity are discussed and presented to students, and students are encouraged to explore such ideas in their art-making process. Students are supported as young artists with opportunities for self-expression through the varied art supplies, materials, and equipment.

Seventh-Grade Art on the iPad

This course aims to move students from the role of consumer of digital content to that of creator of digital content. Students in the Art on the iPad course learn how to create fun and sophisticated works of art while using apps on the class set of iPads. Students will explore digital drawing and painting, photography, and sequential art (comics, gifs, short animations). There will be some cross-over analog projects in which students combine mixed media

materials such as stencil making, spray painting, and other analog art tools to build upon digital creations. No previous experience or equipment is needed for this course, and no homework will be assigned in this course. Using a class set of iPads and a library of artmaking of apps, students will be able to develop a digital portfolio of projects that will showcase their creativity.

Eighth-Grade Introduction to Sculpture

Students in Introduction to Sculpture learn basic ceramic hand-building techniques. Prior to building with clay they develop a scale drawing that can be used as a blueprint to then build a three-dimensional form. Students use terracotta clay using a pinch-pot technique and also develop other techniques in building with clay. Glazing techniques are introduced using non-toxic underglazes and students explore drawing on clay with glazes and with carving techniques. Students also create a drawing using a variety of tones from the gray scale to show an invented environment depicting their sculpture's natural habitat.

Eighth-Grade Digital Media (formerly Introduction to Photoshop)

Students in the Digital Media course learn how to use digital software to explore photography, graphic design, digital storytelling, and non-narrative animation. Through a series of tutorials and creative projects, students are introduced to fundamental editing and drawing tools in Adobe Creative Cloud, and will leave this course with working knowledge in a variety of Adobe apps, including Photoshop, Illustrator, and Fresco. In this course students will also learn how to manage a workflow that moves back and forth between the laptop and iPad. No previous experience or equipment is needed for this course, and no homework will be assigned in this course. Using a class set of MacBooks and iPads, with online access to Adobe Creative Cloud software, students will be able to develop a digital portfolio of photography and design projects within the structure of our time together in class.

Eighth-Grade Perspective Drawing

Students will study two-point perspective drawing. Perspective drawing is a technique that gives the illusion of spatial depth, or perspective, to drawings and paintings. Once they acquire this fundamental skill, they will apply it to a large scale drawing of a building. They will research architects and different styles of architecture, choose a building and create an architectural composition. Students will incorporate their own creativity in the composition by shading half with pencil and painting half with acrylic paints.

Drama

Sixth-Grade Drama

In sixth-grade Drama, students enter the world of creativity through improvisation and story theater. They use voices and bodies to explore classical and contemporary texts. Theater 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 an authentic way. The experiential nature of this class means that students are constantly engaged, whether in playing, moving, vocalizing, writing, acting, or discussing theater pieces. By the end of the course, students will have a better sense of who they are as middle schoolers, and will have developed some richly detailed theater pieces based on literature as well as on their own experiences.

Seventh-Grade Drama

With a firm grounding in improvisation and story theater, seventh-grade drama students are ready to engage with dramatic literature. Students will explore texts using the actor's instrument: voice, body, and imagination, and in doing so, will gain a deeper understanding of the literature while developing empathy for people different from themselves. Monologues, Shakespearean sonnets, scripted work, theater design, happenings in Chicago theater, and exploration of jobs in the world of theater are some of the units of this course. Dramatic literature is chosen to reflect our student body, and expand our understanding of the world at large. Students investigate the purpose of theater: is it merely a form of entertainment, or does it have potential to make deep and lasting social change? Through the works of Lorraine Hansberry, August Wilson, and others, our drama students often reach the conclusion that the art form of drama deeply impacts a society. Collaborative work in ensembles continues to be stressed, and students will also have opportunities to share their individual creations.

Eighth-Grade Drama

After building a strong foundation in sixth-grade and seventh-grade drama courses, eighth-grade students can choose from three drama classes that suit their interests. They may also opt to take all three courses.

Studio Theater Workshop

In Studio Theater Workshop, students explore various schools and styles of theater, including, but not limited to musicals, contemporary movement-based theater, Noh and Butoh, Greek drama, documentary theater, and sketch comedy. Students gain an appreciation of the relevance of each style of theater explored, and begin to understand the power of theater to broaden understanding of humanity, and to affect change in the world. As students reflect on

the work of diverse ensembles, they often discover aspects of their own identities, and find new ways to give voice to their values through the pieces they create. Students rehearse and workshop these pieces in class, and learn to critique one another's work in a constructive manner. Students also play beloved improv and theater games.

Exploring Comedy and Improv

In Exploring Comedy and Improv, students have the opportunity to laugh a little or a lot as they investigate the history of comedy and improv from ancient times to the present, and engage in creating their own comedic pieces from improv-based scenes to stand-up routines. Students will explore comedic styles such as Commedia dell'Arte, and learn about Chicago's unique history in the world of comedy as they explore the work of Viola Spolin and the roots of improvised theater.

Eighth-Grade Theater Design and Technology

In eighth-grade Theater Design and Technology, students explore the primary areas of theater design: set, costume, light and sound, and create original practical designs for each. Design is grounded in theater history, historical research, and text analysis. Students use design to deepen their understanding of storytelling, character, composition, and performance. The focus of this course is on developing the creative process and each students' individual voice, taste, and aesthetic. Students work collaboratively to design and build a set piece that may be used in various theater spaces depending on the needs of the department, including on stage for Middle School theater productions. Student work is documented in an online portfolio, which the students use as a tool for reflection and take with them for use in high school portfolio reviews.

Home Economics and Sustainability

The Middle School Home Economics and Sustainability program offers rotation classes for sixth grade, seventh grade, and eighth grade students. The sixth-grade Home Economics and Sustainability course 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 this thinking is applied to each area of the home economics curriculum.

Seventh-grade and eighth-grade students have two course options. The seventh- and eighth-grade home economics and sustainability courses build on all of the topics introduced in the sixth-grade class. The seventh- and eighth-grade world cuisines courses present 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 ways 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 diverse voices in 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 consider multiple perspectives. They are encouraged to develop open-mindedness toward differing points of view and learn to contextualize cultural products. 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. Students also engage in intellectual exploration and creative expression in varied individual and collaborative projects.

The Humanities Department employs an interdisciplinary approach in teaching the skills and ideas of English and history. Students explore the structure of a novel, the literary techniques an author has used to craft a 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 integrates language arts, literature, and history. Through an in-depth, interdisciplinary study of ancient societies, students will explore the cultural, political, and economic foundations of human societies. They will also use discussion, projects, simulations, and guided research to grapple with issues of justice, peace and conflict, and human-environment interaction that are relevant to our current moment.

Reading selections include short stories, folktales and mythology, poetry, novels, textbook chapters, and nonfiction articles. Students also engage with a range of nontraditional texts, including historical artifacts, visual artwork, maps, videos, podcasts, and infographics. Students practice a variety of reading strategies to help them comprehend, analyze, and interpret different types of texts.

Discussion is an important component of the Humanities curriculum. Through discussion, students develop their capacity to reason with evidence, consider multiple perspectives, and work collectively to build a deeper understanding of texts.

In sixth grade, students learn to use writing for several different purposes. They employ note-taking methods to capture and retain information and use journaling to reflect and process their ideas. They author creative and narrative pieces to tell stories and compose formal essays to explain and persuade. Students use prewriting strategies to plan out their writing and practice elaborating on their ideas with details, evidence, and examples. They develop their ability to structure longer pieces using paragraphs, topic sentences, and transitions and, in the context of these assignments, practice editing skills as they develop proper grammar and mechanics.

Students also learn historical reasoning concepts, such as assessing the context of a source and comprehending chronology and cause-and-effect relationships. In addition to reading and writing activities, students are introduced to long-term, multi-step projects and are guided in practicing project management skills. In collaboration with the middle school librarians, students learn about and begin practicing scholarly research. They develop inquiry questions, locate useful print and online sources, record citations, make notes, and communicate conclusions.

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. The course is arranged in a scope and sequence that integrates art, music, fiction, and non-fiction into a broad picture of the development of America’s identity. 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.

The Seventh-Grade Humanities course emphasizes the development of strong writing skills. In particular, students develop analytical writing skills, using close analysis of textual evidence to develop support for thesis-driven writing. They learn how to organize and support their ideas using examples and quotations from diverse sources and develop a more complete understanding of correct spelling, syntax, punctuation, and grammar. Students also practice the various stages of the drafting process—including pre-writing, outlining, peer editing, revision, 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, written, and graphic expression of information and arguments, and active listening. Techniques for developing these skills include daily journal writing, expository essays, personal narratives, creative poetry and short fiction, research projects, and other methods of expression, such as films, podcasts, and presentations.

Seventh-Grade Humanities challenges students to be increasingly aware of their executive functioning and project-management skills. Throughout the year, students are guided as they approach projects and assessments of increasing complexity, and as they self-assess their successes and areas for improvement, with the goal of developing as self-reliant learners and confident and empathetic collaborators.

Units of study address the following subjects:

- Issues of identity, focusing on the individual, membership in different communities, and our nation as a whole
- An exploration of pre-Columbian America, as a way to bridge the sixth grade’s focus on ancient cultures, to seventh-grade themes such as historiography and cultural context
- The goals, strengths, and challenges faced by colonizers and indigenous peoples during the age of colonization, including how various first encounters laid the groundwork for the future of America, and the role that bias and cultural context plays in both interactions among historical peoples and in the work of historians of various eras.

- 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
- Explorations of more recent and contemporary American society, especially as current issues demonstrate the legacy of the issues of cultural and economic justice—colonization, the institution of slavery, Indian Removal Policy, the incipient Industrial age, and others—that are studied in this era of American history

Eighth-Grade Humanities

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, focusing attention on asking some key questions in each of our units of study: How do we investigate, act, and create with a view toward justice? What promises to ourselves and each other, as Americans, have we not lived up to and how can we imagine and create a world in which we will do so? How can understanding our past help us to wrestle with our present and imagine our future? How can works of art, literature, music, and other forms of representation be used by others and by us to understand, explore, and make meaning of the world?

The eighth-grade humanities program continues to build critical thinking, listening, and writing skills. Students write a variety of types of expository and creative writing, including analytical essays, a research paper, journal writing, and poetry. Throughout the year, students read 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 written assignments. Journal writing helps build stamina and voice while also encouraging deep thinking about our topics.

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.

Key Units of Study

- The US Constitution
- Reconstruction—The Second Revolution
- Chicago—A study in migration, revolution, struggle, and growth during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

- World War I—Peace and War
- The Civil Rights Movement

Mathematics

Mathematics education in the Middle School provides opportunities for students to learn thoroughly and to enjoy mathematics. Students use inductive and deductive reasoning, engage in rich, thought-provoking exercises, and continue to build on prior knowledge. Throughout, there is an emphasis on real-world applications as well as rigorous study of mathematical properties. Students learn to write clear solutions to problems and to articulate their processes aloud so as to communicate effectively with others.

The curriculum follows closely a standard textbook, supplemented by exploration activities both written and online. In addition, students in Grade 6, Pre-Algebra, and Algebra I courses receive an account with ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces), which provides online assessments followed by guided practice on topics of interest specific to each individual. ALEKS allows students to improve their basic skills, to master the course content more thoroughly, or to explore topics beyond their current curriculum.

The sixth-grade course provides a thorough study of arithmetic and introduces concepts and skills of algebra and geometry. The Pre-Algebra course provides a strong pre-algebra and pre-geometry curriculum, followed in Grade 8 by the study of Algebra I. Some students pursue an accelerated math sequence, in Grade 7 studying Algebra I and in Grade 8 proceeding on to the study of Geometry.

Students who want an extra challenge in math may choose to attend their grade level math team, which meets once per week to practice for math contests sponsored by the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics (ICTM), the Illinois Math League (IML), and the American Mathematics Competitions (AMC). Students are also invited to attend MathCounts practice to prepare for the MathCounts School Competitions; the top ten students each year constitute our travel team and compete at the Chapter and perhaps even State Competitions.

Sixth-Grade Math

In Sixth-Grade Math, students thoroughly study the basic arithmetic skills of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing positive and negative integers, fractions, and decimals; they solve problems using ratios, proportions, and percents; they graph points and transform figures on the coordinate plane; they write, interpret, and use algebraic expressions, equations,

and inequalities; they solve problems using linear equations; they solve problems involving areas of plane figures and surface areas and volumes of prisms; and they develop an intuitive sense of probability. Throughout, there is an emphasis on real-world applications.

At the completion of sixth-grade math, students are placed into Pre-Algebra or Algebra I for seventh grade. The selection process for their placement is thoughtfully considered, taking into account a multitude of factors. Beyond assessing academic maturity and study habits nurtured during their time in the sixth grade, we also require students placed in Algebra I to attain an average score of at least 93% each semester. Furthermore, students are expected to consistently exhibit exceptional work habits, earning a rating of "Consistently Demonstrated" in all applicable middle school standards.

Pre-Algebra

In Pre-Algebra, students extend their study of the basic arithmetic skills to include radicals, integer exponents, and scientific notation; they analyze proportional relationships and graph them as lines; they solve problems using linear equations and inequalities; they apply proportional relationships to similar figures; they identify measures of angles formed when two parallel lines are crossed by a transversal; they transform figures on a coordinate plane by translation and dilation; they solve problems involving the circumferences and areas of circles, the perimeters and areas of plane figures and composite shapes, and the surface areas and volumes of cylinders, prisms, and pyramids; and they calculate probabilities of random events.

To take Algebra 1 in eighth grade, students must end the year with an overall average at or above 70% in Pre-Algebra, which is calculated by averaging the Semester 1 and Semester 2 grades.

Algebra I

In the Algebra I courses in seventh and eighth grade, students graph and solve problems involving linear equations and inequalities; they model data using linear regression; they solve systems of equations and inequalities using both algebraic and graphical methods; they graph exponential functions and solve problems involving exponential equations (including population growth and exponential decay); they develop arithmetic skills of adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and factoring polynomials and radicals; they graph quadratic functions and solve problems involving quadratic equations (including motion under the influence of gravity), both by factoring and by use of the quadratic formula; and they transform the graphs of linear, absolute value, and quadratic functions by translation and dilation. Every lesson includes real-world applications that illustrate the usefulness of the mathematics students are learning. Hands-on investigations teach students to move flexibly among various mathematical representations, including graphs, tables, and equations.

Emphasis is made on establishing a conceptual foundation first, then learning a systematic procedure for solving problems.

To take Geometry in eighth grade, students must end the year with an overall average at or above 75% in Algebra 1, which is calculated by averaging the Semester 1 and Semester 2 grades.

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; they write careful definitions, formulate conjectures, and verify those conjectures to establish theorems; they become adept at both direct and indirect proof; they study properties of isosceles triangles, perpendicular lines, and parallel lines; they distinguish necessary and sufficient properties of kites, rhombuses, trapezoids, parallelograms, rectangles, and squares; they make use of both congruent and similar triangles; they study figures in Euclidean space; they prove and apply the Pythagorean theorem; they define and apply the functions of right triangle trigonometry; they explore many properties of circles; and they calculate areas of plane figures and surface areas and volumes of prisms, cylinders, pyramids, and cones. The course is amply supplemented with hands-on constructions with straightedge and compass as well as the computer software Geometer's Sketchpad.

Students may proceed on to high school Advanced Algebra (AA) the following year, or those students with an overall average above 80% may proceed on to high school Accelerated Advanced Algebra and Trigonometry (AAAT).

Math Team

All Middle School students desiring additional challenges 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 administers the AMC 8 math contest, the IML math contest, and individual and group contests sponsored by the ICTM. Contests are open to all Middle School students.

MathCOUNTS

In addition, students may participate in our MATHCOUNTS program, which meets once per week. Students prepare for the Sprint, Target, Team, and Countdown contests administered at Lab. A select number of Middle School students represent Lab at the MathCOUNTS Chapter Competition and may advance to the State and National MathCOUNTS competitions.

Music

The goal 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. Belief in the musical capability of each child informs instruction and provides ways to achieve individual growth in musicianship. The curriculum affirms diverse voices, diverse music, and diverse ideas as a means to create a more equitable understanding and future.

Band

Band is a continuation of Fifth-Grade Band. Students learn how to become part of a large ensemble and develop technical skills on their instruments, as well as musical knowledge. The course aims to develop an understanding of how to create a good tone and play rhythmically as individuals to fit into a much larger picture of sound and create music. Middle School students are asked questions that will help to shape understanding of how to make musical choices to be played in the ensemble.

Choir

The choir curriculum is based on music theory and literacy and their application to choral music. Each student sings the major and minor scales and their accompanying triads each rehearsal, using the solfege system (Do-Re-Mi). This creates a solid foundation for their ability to sing whole and half steps accurately. The keyboard provides a way for them to visualize these intervals (whole and half steps). Each student is expected to be able to identify by letter name all of the notes on the grand staff and piano keyboard; read and execute basic rhythmic patterns in duple and triple meters; and begin to apply the correct solfege syllables as indicated by the key signature. The spiral curriculum achieves all of this, while the students are singing, and actively making music with joy. In rehearsals, the students learn proper vocal technique, including proper breath support, vowel shape, and effective posture. These techniques ensure pitch accuracy while sustaining long vocal lines. The goal is to create independent musicians who are fluent in the language of music.

Orchestra

Orchestra in the Middle School continues the study of violin, viola, cello and bass started in Fifth-Grade Orchestra. The curriculum builds on previously learned skills and technique, as well as incorporating music theory study into daily playing. Students work together as an ensemble to become better musicians and community members while learning how to navigate challenges both in and out of the music classroom. Orchestra students play a variety of music that cultivates an appreciation of a broad spectrum of cultures and genres. The

course also explores project-based learning activities. Highlights include fiddle, jazz, the history of The Beatles and movie soundtracks.

Students in Orchestra prepare for two formal concerts each year, as well as a variety of informal performing opportunities. Students have the option to participate in the Lab Solo & Small Ensemble Festival.

Middle School Orchestra courses progress from the previous year of study. Students entering Orchestra must have completed previous instruction on their instrument at Lab or demonstrate proficiency on their instrument through an assessment with the teachers.

Music Workshop

Music Workshop offers a rigorous, non-performative musical experience for students. Classes explore music in a variety of ways, and emphasize a hands-on approach in all three grade levels.

Sixth-Grade Music Workshop

Students explore topics in music through an interdisciplinary lens. Music theory topics begin with music notation and visual/aural pitch recognition. Students begin instruction on piano, mallet instruments, guitar, and drums.

Seventh-Grade Music Workshop

Students review all topics learned in Sixth-Grade Music Workshop and progress into more advanced activities. Digital audio workstation programs such as Soundtrap are used for collaborative projects.

Eighth-Grade Music Workshop

Music notation and music terminology continue to serve as key components of the curriculum. This gives students additional tools when composing and performing music, and when writing about music. Students will compose for a variety of classroom instruments, as well as guitar. Music workshop students are also performers as performance helps develop notation reading skills and provides immediate feedback of compositions. All music workshop students will play the guitar. Guitar performance reinforces music notation skills, music theory skills, and gives students firsthand experience with an acoustic instrument. Music history forms the final piece of the curriculum. Students learn about music and composers of the past, with an emphasis on music from Chicago, and from traditionally under-represented composers and performers.

Physical Education

The goal of the Middle School physical education program is to provide students with the skills necessary for a lifetime of health and wellness. The curriculum encourages students to develop physical skills, coordination, and fitness. It also teaches them the concepts related to health, fitness, and wellness, and how to apply team strategies in both competitive and non-competitive environments. Students encounter age-appropriate activities designed to promote the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective development of students in team, individual, aquatic, fitness, and rhythmic experiences. Emphasis is placed on basic individual skill development and participation in daily activities and routines. Units range from three to four weeks in length and are designed to address the fitness needs, developmental process, potential skills, and interests of the students. The program is designed to prepare students to be successful in the high school physical education program.

Sixth-Grade Physical Education

Emphasis is placed on basic skill development and low organized games. Units include: soccer, tennis, adventure education, fitness center, touch football, basketball, dance, yoga, tumbling, gymnastics, floor hockey, track, softball, volleyball, and health. The four-week aquatics unit is a pillar of the curriculum, with a focus on skill development and water safety.

Seventh-Grade and Eighth-Grade Physical Education

Emphasis is placed on the development of more advanced skills and strategy in highly organized activities and competitive situations. Units include: soccer, touch football, tennis, volleyball, basketball, swimming, adventure ed, badminton, yoga, fitness center, track, volleyball, softball, and health. There is another four-week aquatics unit reinforcing the skills practiced in earlier grades.

Science

The Middle School science program is guided by the Science Department's Climate Change Statement, Diversity Statement, and Land Acknowledgement Statement. The common themes and skills taught throughout **sixth, seventh, and eighth** grades are:

Themes

- The classification and movement of energy

- Developing and strengthening a sense of scale
- Utilizing levels of organization
- Structure and function

Skills

- Design and development of hands-on projects
- Manipulation of science equipment and materials to obtain data while practicing safety
- Written, verbal, and graphic communication
- Utilizing science process skills
- Develop conclusions based on observed and empirical evidence
- Learning to collaborate with a diverse group of peers

Sixth-Grade Science

The objective of the sixth-grade science program is to teach the skills and processes utilized in the study of science through the study of life science concepts. Students explore this course by participating in a variety of independent and small group activities.

Units of study consist of:

- Cells and Genetics
- Body Systems
- Ecology

Throughout this course, students develop an understanding of life, the interdependence of living things, and the human impact on life.

Seventh-Grade Science

seventh-grade science is a hands-on earth science course utilizing the systems approach. Using various topics such as the geologic time, plate tectonics, and the water cycle students strengthen their understanding of the course's core concepts:

- On Earth, density rules
- On Earth, matter cycles
- On Earth, energy flows in, around, and then out

Students also explore the relationship between humans and the rest of the Earth system.

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 cover:

- Laws of motion
- Forces, energy, and work
- Electricity and magnetism
- Basic chemistry

The course has substantial hands-on and building components. Students use a variety of tools including saws and soldering irons to complete group and individual projects. The iterative engineering process of design, construction, testing and reconstruction plays an important role in the student experience.

World Languages

Through articulated, progressive, and engaging curricula, the World Languages Department in the Middle School endeavors to educate linguistically and culturally competent students who will understand the world through the lens of a language and culture beyond their own.

The objectives of the World Languages Department 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 Languages 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. World languages classes are primarily conducted in the target language (Chinese, French, German or Spanish) and effective communication in a variety of settings is the primary goal. The World Language Laboratory is an additional space used for collaborative work and enhancing language acquisition.

Middle School students are expected to continue with the language they began in the Lower School. Incoming students are placed into an introductory Spanish course track. Textbooks and/or readers are additionally used to scaffold language learning. The curriculum increasingly introduces grammatical concepts while deepening the students' appreciation of the various cultures through the study of arts, films, and literature.

The World Languages Department has a carefully articulated curriculum that strives to enable students to communicate effectively and to begin developing cultural competence. The curriculum allows flexibility for a variety of projects reflecting the rich diversity of our language teachers. The expectation is that all students at a particular level gain mastery of the same fundamental skills, allowing them to proceed to the next level successfully.

These are the language skill standards:

- Demonstrates listening comprehension in different contexts
- Comprehends appropriate reading material
- Student shows acquisition of new vocabulary
- Written expression shows increasing accuracy
- Oral production is comprehensible
- Student understands targeted grammatical structures
- Student reflects on target culture's products, practices, and places

Athletic Programs

The Middle School 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.

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
Coed Cross Country Coed Sailing Girls Volleyball Boys Soccer	Girls Basketball Boys Basketball	Coed Squash Coed Fencing Coed Track and Field Coed Baseball Girls Soccer

For updated information, schedules, scores and news about the Athletic Programs, please visit the webpage: <http://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/athletics/index.aspx> .

Clubs

Students in the Middle School create and run a wide variety of club offerings, most of which are scheduled to meet once per week in classrooms during lunch periods. Clubs in the Middle School are, for the most part, initiated by students with the support of available faculty sponsors at the start of each academic year. Club meeting days and locations are announced regularly in the daily Middle School Bulletin (morning announcements). The Middle School Club Assembly occurs each year in September, giving students a platform to promote and describe each club to the entire student body. Club creation and scheduling are coordinated by the Middle School Dean of Students.

Middle School clubs provide students with an enriching range of opportunities to explore their interests, share their passions with others, develop social and leadership skills, and interact with peers in both academic and non-academic settings. Clubs also allow students to meet with students and teachers across all three middle school grade levels. Some clubs even offer students the chance to compete at the local, state, and/or national level.

Participating in clubs is voluntary, and students can choose to attend the same or different clubs each week. In general, students are encouraged to be selective; a genuine commitment to one or two clubs is often more rewarding than passive membership and inconsistent attendance in several clubs.

General Interest Clubs

The breadth of "general interest" clubs offered in the Middle School is a real-time reflection of the changing and diverse interests of the Middle School student body. Although each year a unique list of clubs is offered, the list below contains a selection of some of the more popular or long-standing clubs:

Book Club	LEGO® Club	Pokémon Club
Chess Club	Magic the Gathering Club	Rubik's Cube Club
Drama Club	Marvel Club	Star Wars Club
Dungeons and Dragons Club	Middle School Library Advisory Board (MLAB)	Student Council
Economics Club	Miyazaki Movies Club	With Gratitude Club
Jazz Band	Photography Club	

Cultural Clubs/Affinity Groups

Multiculturalism and diversity are essential, highly valued, and respected elements of the

Middle School experience. Affinity groups and clubs provide an important opportunity for students who share aspects of their identity to gather each week. Affinity groups and clubs build a more inclusive experience in the Middle School. Identities around which affinity groups are organized may include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, and nationality.

Asian Students
Association
Black Students
Association
Boys of Color

Girls of Color
Jewish Students
Association
Mixed Students
Association

Muslim Students
Association
PRISM

Co-Curricular and Academic Clubs

The Middle School club program also includes clubs which supplement the academic curriculum and enable students to pursue scholarly areas of interest more deeply and creatively in an informal and social environment. Some of these clubs, such as the STEM teams listed below, offer students the chance to compete at the local, state, and/or national level. Other clubs, such as the publications clubs, give students a voice and creative outlet to express themselves within the Middle School community.

Publications

Yearbook Club
Jammed Locker (Middle School newspaper)

STEM Teams

Computer Science Club
MathCOUNTS & Math Teams
Robotics Club
Science Olympiad Club

For more information about clubs in the Middle School navigate to:

<https://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/program/middle-school/middle-school-clubs>

Service Learning Program

The Middle School service learning program is designed to provide opportunities for sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students to become active participants in volunteer activities throughout Chicago area communities. 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. The program aims to foster students' sense of responsibility to the broader community. Students engage in service and reflection that instill the value of providing time, effort, and resources to others in pursuit of a more just society.

Service learning can transform students into better learners and citizens. The program enriches classroom learning by applying students' knowledge and skills in the service of a diverse community. These experiences strengthen the Middle School community by working together towards common goals. The activities incorporate reflection, which in turn develops students' awareness of their power to effect social change.

The combination of service and learning develops civic-minded Middle School students who learn the value of giving to others through community service. The program not only allows students to work cooperatively in peer groups, but it also provides opportunities to connect with people of all ages. The following four objectives serve 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.
- **Art:** To engage in fine and performing arts designed to enhance the quality of life for others.

Learning and Counseling Services

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

The goals of the Learning and Counseling Department are to:

- acknowledge 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 growth and achievement through self-recognition of individual strengths, challenges, and unique ways of learning.
- collaborate with parents, faculty, administrators, and specialists to help students achieve an appropriate and successful educational experience.

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

- obtaining information from students, teachers, and families.
- reviewing students' cumulative records.
- observing students in class.
- meeting with students and families.
- participating in the development of a planned partnership between home and school to support each child's path towards success.

Learning Services

The Middle School learning coordinators strive to help all students improve their academic performance according to their needs. The learning coordinators work with students and their families, counselors, faculty and administrators to facilitate appropriate support. The learning coordinators may also refer parents to independent professionals and organizations that provide services which support the work of the Middle School. Such services may include diagnostic testing, remediation of specific learning disabilities, consultation with medical professionals and other therapists, and tutor referrals.

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 Laboratory Schools that all rating scales and written requests for information as part of an

evaluation for learning issues be processed through learning coordinators. They distribute the materials and submit the completed documents directly to the requesting evaluator(s).

Referrals

Middle School counselors and the learning coordinators 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. Learning coordinators maintain a list of tutors, which is made available to families by request.

Counseling Services

Middle School counselors support the social and emotional health of students in the school environment. Each grade level is assigned one primary counselor who then follows the grade level throughout its entire Middle School experience. Counselors provide direct services to students through individual and group work to enhance their experience and facilitate self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making competencies. Counselors provide indirect services to administrators, faculty, parents, and external service providers to help create an appropriately supportive environment for all. These services include collaboration, consultation, and referrals. Counseling at the Laboratory Schools is guided by principles of respect, agency, empathy, equity, and trauma-informed care.

Rowley Middle School Library

The Rowley Middle School Library seeks to provide the Middle School community with a supportive and comprehensive information-seeking experience. The librarians work to facilitate a love of reading and access to materials through a physical environment that welcomes all students. The library program is designed to empower students to become critical users and producers of information via information literacy instruction that supports classroom teachers' curricula while building transferable skills. Through supporting students and faculty, the library program assists Middle School students in the lifelong process of learning more about themselves and the world, and creating meaningful intersections between the two. The Rowley Middle School Library is committed to defending intellectual freedom, encouraging curiosity and inquiry, and to building an inclusive school-wide community of readers and learners. One-to-one readers' advisory provided by librarians is the backbone of the library program.

The Library's approach to information literacy instruction encompasses not only the building of traditional research skills, such as location and navigation of print materials and research databases, but also includes a direct effort to make students savvy consumers and thoughtful producers of digital media.

The student-centered Rowley Middle School Library (2700 square feet) provides a small, but warm and welcoming environment for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. The space consists of soft chairs and pillows for pleasure reading, a classroom for library instruction and booktalks, and two reading rooms for group and individual work. Book displays, magazines, a graphic novel collection, and examples of student work can be found throughout the library.

Technology (laptop and desktop computers) is integrated throughout the Library to ensure that students can access and create digital resources.

The Middle School librarians work closely with teachers to provide both online and print resources for research units as well as information literacy instruction. Library assistants provide additional support. Middle School students use the library for research and independent reading on a scheduled basis.

Programming includes the Zena Sutherland Award for Children's Literature (run in partnership with Knes Library), a Summer Reading initiative, the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, Banned Books Week, book clubs, Middle School Library Advisory Board, and author visits. The Library also hosts additional outreach programming, including storytelling and book-to-movie events.

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, identities, and viewpoints. A current, culturally inclusive fiction collection supports individual reading and curricular needs, while an up-to-date non-fiction collection and a well-rounded reference collection supports student research. 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 17,000 books and audiovisual materials, including a robust ebook platform; 15 magazines; four professional and two student newspapers; a web-based catalog; and myriad online reference sources and databases. Students also have access to the full collection of electronic databases available through the University of Chicago library system. Through interlibrary loan, students have access to materials from the high school and lower school libraries, as well as archival documents and publications and additional special collections. While actively expanding electronic resources, the library

nevertheless maintains a strong commitment to collecting, maintaining, and promoting print resources.