



Program Handbook

Grades 6 – 8

2015-2016

Founded on Rudolf Steiner's humanitarian curriculum, The Denver Waldorf School awakens and inspires students' critical thinking, emotional intelligence and artistic expression, preparing them to bring relevant contributions to the world.

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Grades 6 – 8 Curriculum

Middle School is a time of growth and transition for the pre-adolescent student. The Middle School students need to be challenged to raise their expectations of what they can accomplish. The Denver Waldorf Middle School Faculty and Staff want to partner with parents to provide an environment of support and strength to meet these expectations. The Denver Waldorf Middle School provides a curriculum that validates their experience of rapid growth and development and provides schoolwork with real connections to the outer world.

The Middle School students are exposed to more special subjects as their world expands. The relationship with the Class Teacher continues to be important in Middle School, but the student continues to form relationships with more Special Subject Teachers and deal with a more varied set of subjects; he or she is expected to do more homework and manage his or her time more independently.

This packet is intended to support your family's experience of Middle School by providing information on the curriculum, Middle School events, dress code, and more. If you have any questions, please contact your Class Teacher or Christa Gustafson, Office Manager, at extension 100.

Main Lesson Blocks

Science

Formal science classes are added to the curriculum in Middle School, culminating in the comprehensive program in the High School. The study of science turns to the lawfulness that comes from cause-and-effect relationships in the physical world. The focus is on a threefold approach to the phenomena: observation, evaluation, and conceptualization. There is an emphasis on the hands-on and visual approaches in the Middle School, by conducting experiments that speak to the kinesthetic learners and creating drawings that serve the visual.

In Grade 6, the threefold approach is applied to electricity, magnetism, optics, acoustics, and heat in physics. Geography expands to include Europe (paralleling the study of Rome in history) and South America (as an extension of the North American studies in Grade 5). The polarity between the heights and the depths is explored in the complementary studies of Astronomy and Mineralogy.

In Grade 7, a mathematical approach is applied for the first time to physics content in mechanics, acoustics, electricity, heat, and optics. In mechanics, for example, fulcrums

are studied by first approaching the phenomena with seesaws and weights, and by identifying levers all around them in their homes and lives, then developing a rule or law. The students then use the rule to predict leverage and mechanical advantage for new arrangements. In chemistry, combustion, the lime cycle, and acids and bases form the content. The transformation of a substance through burning is an important highlight in this course. Nutrition, as well as physiology, is also taught. In Geography, Africa is studied, continuing the expansion outward from the local to the farther extents of the world.

In Grade 8, the study of geography becomes more ambitious by encompassing the world through various approaches chosen by the teacher. In physics, students learn how certain concepts are applied to technology or natural systems. The content areas (heat, light, electricity, acoustics) are deepened and now include motors, and the study of pressure (hydraulic and pneumatic). Organic chemistry includes an overview of the nature of and experiments with sugars, starches, proteins, fats, and oils. Human anatomy from the perspective of the musculoskeletal system is studied. The anatomy of the ear and the eye are also often brought at this time. Eighth graders also study meteorology.

History

Grade 6 history often begins with a quick review of the life and conquests of Alexander the Great. Important highlights of life in the Roman Empire are studied, including the rise of the Empire, the emperors, the Republic, conquests, government, building and construction, barbarian incursions, and the fall of the empire. Later in the year students delve into the life of medieval Europe. This includes, but is not limited to, feudalism, peasant life, knighthood, and the life of the monasteries. The life of Mohammed and the rise of Islam as a counterforce to Christianity are studied. This naturally brings in the Crusades. Parallels to modern life become evident in this block. The sixth graders participate in the annual Medieval Games event with other regional Waldorf schools.

In Grade 7 the students study European history from the late Middle Ages through the Renaissance. Key biographies of people who were forerunners of the times or individuals who particularly exemplified a character type from that time are studied in depth. As the curriculum moves towards the Reformation, the role of the Roman Catholic Church is explored with emphasis on the developments that took place within the church that contributed to the turbulence of the times. Not only are the changes that took place in the religious/political life studied, but also the explorers in science, art, and world travel. The students deeply immerse themselves in the art of the times through their own reproductions of the works of the Renaissance masters.

The Grade 8 history curriculum strives to span the time from Elizabethan England through the 20th century by looking at the social, political, and economic climates surrounding revolutions through individual biographies, art, literature, and pertinent readings. Aspects of American history (The Revolutionary War, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, Civil and World Wars) become familiar territory. The history of revolutions and its world-wide impact is also explored.

Special Subjects

Eurythmy

Eurythmy incorporates movement, spatial awareness, language, poetry, and music into one artistic form of expression. Eurythmy embodies a language of gestures that personify the sounds and moods of poetry and verse. This artistic movement transforms body movement into speech and music. Tone Eurythmy, a variation of Eurythmy, incorporates gestures that show musical tones and intervals, choreographed to interpret a piece of music. During Eurythmy classes, Grade 6 students are presented with more complicated geometric forms. Copper rod exercises that enhance coordination and posture are taken up in earnest. In Grades 7 and 8 the musical intervals are introduced.

Physical Education

A transition from cooperative games to competitive sports begins in Grade 6. Basic fundamentals and proper skill development is emphasized. The curriculum culminates in a Medieval Fair, involving area Waldorf schools, in which students in a medieval period atmosphere, meet outdoor movement challenges that include group initiative events and individual obstacle courses. In Grades 7 and 8 additional sporting activities are introduced, while attention is given to perfecting technique and learning through practice. Emphasis is on sportsmanship.

Handwork

Handwork includes hand and machine sewing, highlighting the Waldorf Main Lesson curriculum. For example, students in Grade 7 might hand sew Renaissance costumes or students in Grade 8 learning about the Industrial Revolution might machine sew quilts for charity. Students in Grade 7 will also learn wool felting. The Handwork lessons are an engaging, lively, and subtly relevant time of the week for the students.

Math

Added here in Middle School as a formal special subject, it is designed to culminate in the comprehensive program in the High School. Math tutoring is sometimes recommended on an as-needed basis. Students can expect that homework will be

assigned every class throughout the year. The special subject lessons are complemented by math blocks taught in main lesson by weekly skills practice by the class teacher. The main lesson blocks may include: percents, business math, geometric drawing, and the golden mean.

The Grade 6 Math curriculum is based on an intense review of previously taught material. This review is done in such a way that there is always something new. A continual theme through the year is the sense of number and the interrelationship between division, fractions, decimals, and percents, with fractions playing the central role. Another theme in Grade 6 is developing good work habits. Weekly homework assignments, organization skills, and keeping a good notebook are emphasized.

The 7th graders' introduction to algebra in the main lesson is an important milestone in the development of the students' abstract thinking. This serves as a crucial foundation for studying mathematics in High School. Another central theme for Grade 7 is ratios, through which pi and irrational numbers are introduced. The study of geometry continues with the Euclidean constructions that were introduced in Grade 6, culminating in the Pythagorean Theorem. The students also spend time working with historical number systems and number bases.

Much of our Grade 8 math main lessons are dedicated to nontraditional topics and stereometry (the study of three-dimensional solids) and loci (the study of two-dimensional curves such as the conic sections), in order to develop the capacity of exact imagination. The traditional topics covered in Grade 8 include: geometry, algebra, inequalities, polynomials, algebraic fractions, and dimensional analysis.

Music

In Grade 6, the string players join the brass players for a class orchestra, which continues in 7th and 8th grades. In chorus and orchestra for these grades, the students learn more complex and challenging vocal and instrumental arrangements, demanding attention in the lesson and more instrument practice outside of class. Eighth graders are invited to join the high school chorus, which provides them the opportunity for an even greater awareness and experience of vocal music. Recorders continue to be played in main lesson, with the bass and recorders added in 7th or 8th grade to the already proficient soprano and alto players, allowing for four-part harmony.

Fine Arts

In Middle School the students have to become more conscious of their watercolor painting activity and to develop spatial and color perspective. Students are instructed to begin with the lightest color and work forward, reserving the smallest brush for the end

of the painting. Students are directed to simply touch the color onto the paper continuing in the wet-on-wet method from the earlier grades.

The element of drawing people and animals with accuracy and beauty becomes part of the main lessons with the study of Renaissance, the skeleton, etc. Extra art lessons may also include: mosaic work, clay sculpting, perspective drawing, mask making, geometric forms and more.

Social Dance

The Middle School Dance Program is intended to bring to the students a measure of proficiency, confidence, and cooperation in movement when dancing and offers a Fall and Spring Middle School Dance. The dances taught include: swing, cha-cha, waltz, and foxtrot. These dances require partners, which promote a socially healthy exchange between the boys and the girls. The 6th grader learns the basics of each of the dances during the spring semester and is invited to the Middle School Spring Dance. The 7th grader continues to learn new and more complicated steps, growing in abilities. The 8th grader has the opportunity to perfect his or her abilities in movement and rhythm, learning how to lead and follow a partner with expanding confidence.

Spanish

In Grade 6, a new lesson book with vocabulary, grammar, and verb work is introduced. Earlier understanding of grammatical concepts is strengthened, and verbs are now conjugated. Students recite poetry and sing songs from the modern world. Students also read more complex literature, such as a story of Cesar Chavez written entirely in Spanish. Grades 7 and 8 are still very much in the developmental stage. Students continue to review vocabulary, conjugate verbs, and accomplish some sophisticated reading in English of the political geography of Latin America.

Students may make arrangements for Spanish tutoring during lunch/recess for no extra fee. New students are expected to have Spanish basics. Students can expect homework to be assigned every class through the year. The goal of the Middle School Spanish Program is to create the foundation for conversational Spanish in the High School.

Woodwork

Geometry, math, anatomy and woodwork come together in the instruction of the art and craft of sculpture. Woodwork as a special subject begins in Grade 5 and follows through Grade 12. Students first complete a hickory carver's mallet, a maple serving-spoon, and a bowl or chest of various shapes and woods. The fundamental tools they use are handsaws, chisels, gouges, rasps, files, and sandpaper. With these tools, they learn to

shape, smooth, and polish wood. The underlying goal is to teach the students patience, perseverance, and pride in their work.

The next step, after these three projects, is to develop drawing skills related to woodworking, enabling them to create simple three-dimensional sketches that can be translated into solid forms in wood. A simple bird, fish, or animal is carved. More complex tools and techniques are introduced. Teaching students to whittle, using a variety of knives, may be initiated. Basic methods of finishing wood with oils, waxes, and paints are learned.

By Grade 7, students are challenged to further refine their skills by completing increasingly more difficult designs. Scale models and caricatures may be introduced. Some basic safety and use of power tools will be learned. By the end of Grade 8, students will have completed a project involving scale modeling or create a toy or mechanism with moving parts. Realism is stressed in carvings of animals and advanced techniques are learned with hand tools and whittling knives. Students are encouraged to develop their problem-solving skills in mechanical designs and woodworking techniques.

Language Arts Studies

The intention for these studies, occurring in 7th and 8th grades, is to provide to the students a level of comfort and proficiency in the use of written language before entering high school. In this evolving program there are many opportunities for the classes to write, learn the important components of grammar, and experiment with styles of writing. The 7th graders will have more of an emphasis on the structure of text and specific use of words that support correct grammatical constructions, while the eighth graders will spend more time on literary analysis.

Latin

Latin is taught in the 6th grade. The goal for the students is that they experience the language in support of the 6th grade studies of Rome and the Middle Ages. Learning the rudimentary elements of Latin and its prefixes, suffixes and roots will also benefit pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary of English.

Field Trips and Class Trips

Both Field Trips and Class Trips are an important part of our Middle School curriculum. In Middle School, students begin to have an active interest in knowing and understanding the real world around them. These trips provide students with an opportunity to align what they are studying in the classroom with “real world” experiences.

A Grade 6 Geology block might take students to Marble, CO, or the Sand Dunes; a Grade 7 Explorers Block might provide an orienteering experience in the mountains; students every year attend a Shakespeare production to support the Language Arts curriculum. Trips also provide an important opportunity for students to cultivate their social and emotional skills and learn in an out-of-school environment how to cooperate and get along. Finally, as serving our community permeates much of what we do, these trips often include an element of community service. Students might spend a day gardening at a home for the elderly or urban farm; on a class trip students might help build houses for low income families or prepare farm fields on a reservation; or students might perform artistically and musically for the elderly or homeless.

Class Plays

Middle School is a pivotal time for the pre-adolescent. The young teenager is entering a new phase of life. Whereas earlier, a majority of their life and learning was imitative, they are now becoming creators. As their bodies and minds develop, they have the ability not only to create new life but also to create ideas, stories, music, and art. The world is their oyster. Yet, adolescence (which means “to wander”) can be full of many seemingly tumultuous events.

Class Teachers choose the Class Play and cast accordingly. The Class Teacher continues to act as director of the play, although the increasing complexity of music, costumes, choreography, etc., make increased involvement of special subject teachers and even parents essential components of the final production. As always, the Middle School students will perform the play during a day performance for the appropriate grades in the school. The entire parent body is, of course, invited to the evening performance of the play – it is especially important for the students to receive support in the form of an audience for which to perform.

Parent/Teacher Conferences and Reports

Middle School Parent/Teacher Conferences are conducted twice a year. These conferences are the formal arena where teachers and parents partner together in meeting the needs of the students. Teachers also share an update on the child’s academic, social, emotional, creative, and physical skills. Specific dates and times are set aside for these important conferences.

In addition to these conferences, parents may receive block reports and will receive a formal report at the end of the year that provides a comprehensive review of the year’s main lesson and special subject curriculum including goals and expectations for the class as a whole. Teachers will also provide a summary of how the individual child meets the goals and expectations for the year.

Middle School Policies and Procedures

Dress Code

Creating a form for education and fostering an active environment in the Middle School requires an appropriate level of decorum in dress. Students must conform to the expectations below, which promote: movement, concentration, comfort, social inclusiveness, safety, and few distractions. These expectations may be contrary to what is currently fashionable and applies to the Middle School students for the entire school day, including all field trips and school sponsored activities and events unless students are told otherwise. Wearing non-approved clothing is not an option.

Pants

Students may wear jeans, khakis, cargo pants, corduroys, and athletic pants free from words and numbers and logos or media advertising larger than a thumb. Images and repeating patterns on clothing depicting benign, kindly or favorable, or non-skull images are allowed. All must be clean and in good repair—no holes, rips, or frayed edges—and be worn at the waistline without sagging down (or fitting) at the hips.

Shorts and Skirts

Skirts and shorts should be knee length. Otherwise they must be worn with leggings. Shorts and skirts must be free from frayed edges, words and numbers and logos or media advertising larger than a thumb. Images and repeating patterns on clothing depicting benign, kindly or favorable, non-skull images are allowed.

Shirts

DWS t-shirts and sweatshirts that are clean and in good condition may be worn at any time. **No "off the shoulder" shirts may be worn. Tank tops must measure 1 inch or more at the shoulder.** Shirts must fall over the waistband of the pants, shorts, or skirts. Shirts may not be tight fitting or “see-through” and may not expose cleavage, midriff, or undergarments. They must be free from all words and numbers and logos or media advertising larger than a thumb. Images and repeating patterns on clothing depicting benign, kindly or favorable, non-skull images are allowed. Other sweatshirts, hoodies, jackets and sweaters (worn out-of-doors for warmth) are exceptions.

Hats

Hats, hoods, and visors should be worn outside of the school building. Once inside, they should be removed and kept in backpacks.

Makeup, Piercings, Tattoos/Body Art

Wearing makeup is not allowed for all 6th graders and older students will be required to remove excessive makeup. Discreet piercing of ears is acceptable for girls and boys with parental guidance and consent—unless deemed too “extreme” (please confer with your teacher). Other facial piercings are not allowed. Tattoos are also not allowed. Marking, writing, or drawing on the skin with ink is prohibited because of its potentially carcinogenic consequences.

Hair Styles and Color

Experience has taught us that drastic or excessive hair color and extreme styles are highly distracting and therefore not permitted. Hairstyles may not cover the eyes.

Shoes

At school, students need the support of a shoe that is sturdy, flexible, stable, and stays on the foot. Dress shoes, slip-ons (without a back or back strap), flip-flops, or heels are examples of shoes that are dangerous on the playground, in gym class, and may not be worn at school.

Scents and Fragrances

To protect those students and adults in the school with sensitivities and/or allergies, perfumes, colognes and after-shave products may not be worn to school. Please be mindful and use discretion when applying deodorants and other products which may contain fragrances.

Jewelry

Jewelry that interferes with learning and activities will be removed.

Dressing for Special Events

During the year there will be special events such as assemblies and concerts – students are expected to wear white shirts with collars or blouses with collars and black bottoms (either pants or skirts that fall to the top of the knee or longer.) For other events such as field trips and dances, the students and parents will be informed in advance as to the appropriate dress for the occasion.

Dress Code Consequences

Students who do not meet the dress code requirements may be allowed to contact parents for appropriate clothing or may be given alternative clothing to wear for the day. Parents may be contacted by the student’s class teacher to discuss dress code violations.

Electronics Policy

Electronic items such as cell phones and any electronic music players may not be used at school. **Communication between parents and students during the school day should be made through the office, ext. 100.** A student may have a cell phone that remains on the teacher's desk during the school day. Otherwise cell phones are to be used outside of school hours and off campus (outside the fenced yard). Electronic items found in violation will be taken to the Main Office or collected by the class teacher where they can be retrieved only by the parents.

Discipline Policy

Each year we distribute The Denver Waldorf School Discipline Policy to all parents and teachers of students in Grades 6 – 8 at our school. This gives everyone a chance to reacquaint themselves with changes and also refresh their memory with the policies. Parents are asked to read and discuss the Discipline Policy with their children during the first week of the school year. We have found that those students who have read and signed the document tend to have fewer difficulties with discipline issues. As parents, you will know the best way to bring these matters to your children according to their ages and your own family values. It is very important that the students know and understand why these policies are in place.

Detention Policy

Discipline involving Level One behavior as outlined in the Discipline Policy will be carried out in “detention” which is held Thursdays from 3:00 – 4:00 pm when all of the teachers are on hand for the weekly pedagogical meeting. This means that students with detention may miss or be late for sports practices or games, music lessons or other activities and appointments on Thursdays. Student notification of detention will occur at the time of the infraction. Parent notification of student detention will occur by the Wednesday evening before detention by phone and/or email. Should the occasion for detention occur on a Thursday, detention would be the following week.

Study Hall

We encourage parents to help their children develop the practice and habit of completing daily homework assignments, whether in academic, practical or fine arts areas. Therefore, students may be asked to attend an after school study hall. Tuesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. are exclusively set aside for middle school students needing assistance or who are behind in math. Parents and students are informed by a teacher at least 24 hours in advance. This means that students attending study halls could miss sports practices, games, music lessons, or other activities and appointments. Using daily recesses for students to complete assigned work is also at the discretion of the teachers.