

F R I E N D S S C H O O L O F B A L T I M O R E



MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSE GUIDE
2011-2012



MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSE GUIDE

Why Friends?

Friends School is the best choice for families of Baltimore who want for their children an education that will ready them to lead their lives with *wisdom* and *confidence*. The Friends School experience stimulates imaginations, engages intellects, strengthens bodies, and protects spirit. It is a school that gives its students the time and the place in which to build the foundation of a happy, prosperous and contributive life. Friends is an independent school in which *girls* and *boys*, women and men share in silence and noise, reflection and debate, with a self-respect and *mutual* regard that allows all to grow ever stronger and truer to themselves. The oldest school in one of America's foundational cities, Friends School of Baltimore is a progressive community of learning; its *commitment to balance* in education the product of centuries of work teaching children to find and keep their own balance in a world that is forever changing. Firmly rooted in the enduring values of the Quakers, today's School is a vibrant, 21st Century learning community that chooses *simplicity* over material possession; *peaceful resolution* of conflict over aggression; *integrity* over expedience; *equality* over elitism; and *stewardship* of the earth as a collective and personal responsibility. Friends students are lovingly educated; they go many places and do many things, each propelled by possibility, motivated by optimism, unrestricted by convention, reinforced by achievement, and guided by principle.

Curriculum Overview

The Middle School uses an interdisciplinary approach to education to help its students form connections between subject areas and their real-life applications. Teachers work cooperatively, integrating lessons in such disciplines as technology, history, English and art to provide children with a more complete understanding of their world. Students learn good work habits, including organizational, research and study skills, in preparation for the demands of Upper School. The following Middle School Curriculum presents each subject area divided by grade

English

A Quaker school provides the perfect atmosphere for students to ask the big questions about life, and middle school is the perfect age for them to discover who they are and how they want to interact with the world. The Middle School English program is designed to foster critical thinking and reading, to help students develop as writers, and to lead them to greater self-awareness.

Grade 6: In sixth grade English, students analyze literature and continue to develop their writing skills. Writing is taught as a process with distinct steps. Students are encouraged to spend ample time in a pre-writing stage that includes brainstorming and clustering their ideas. The actual writing stage often involves peer response and the creation of several drafts. Sixth graders are exposed to a variety of writing experiences. These include writing personal narratives, short stories, journal entries, and poetry. Students are introduced to the process of electronic submission of their work through Moodle.

Class time is also spent on vocabulary development (*Wordly Wise*), reading comprehension (*Six Way Paragraphs*) and usage, mechanics, and grammar, especially punctuation. The main focus of grammar throughout the Middle School is on the structure of the sentence and the use of sentence variety.

Early in the year, we celebrate Banned Books week with classes taught by the librarian. Students choose a challenged or banned book to read independently and give feedback to the class. Further study of literature includes short stories, novels, and poetry. Students review literary terms and figurative language. Some of the novels are coordinated

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with the social studies curriculum, which emphasizes world cultures. The students read such novels as *Shabanu* by Suzanne Fisher Staples, *Waiting for the Rain* by Sheila Gordon, and *Animal Farm* by George Orwell.

Grade 7: Seventh grade English builds upon the sixth grade curriculum, concentrating on literature, writing, grammar, and mechanics. Student writing ranges from personal experience narratives to expository essays. The students are introduced to the concept of scaffolding in writing, where the goal is creating organized, developed, and supported essays. Students will utilize rubrics and graphic organizers in the writing process.

Students are asked to do increasingly critical, detailed reading and are encouraged to be engaged readers. They are introduced to Socratic discussions and are expected to come to class prepared to share ideas. Students review the basic elements of the short story and are introduced to more abstract literary terms and concepts. After studying short stories, students read novels, which may include *The Pearl* by Steinbeck, *Spinelli's Stargirl*, Paolo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, *Slake's Limbo* by Holman, and the play *The Katrina Project*. During each trimester, students independently read books that are thematically or historically related to those studied in Geography class.

A unit on poetry is included at this grade level. Class time is also spent furthering the study of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and grammar, building on what was covered in the sixth grade.

Grade 8: In eighth grade English, students learn to write longer, coherent essays. They continue to develop their vocabularies by learning words in context from their reading and by studying morphemes. The student also develops more critical reading skills by encountering more classical literature.

The year begins with several young adult novels: *So Much to Tell You*, by John Marsden, and *Whirligig*, by Paul Fleischman. Next, students may study the short story and review literary terms. *Romeo and Juliet* is their first classical work. It is read early in the year so the students can further understand *West Side Story* which is studied in eighth grade music. Robert Fagles's translation of *The Odyssey* is our next classic studied. We spend close to a full trimester reading and writing about *The Odyssey*. In the spring, eighth graders read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Lee, and the year ends with Walter Dean Myers's *Fallen Angel*. Both of these novels serve as background literature for their history project. Discussions and compositions focus on theme, character, and conflict, with setting and plot considered to a lesser degree.

English Summer Reading and Writing: All students are required to read three or more books and do some writing during the summer. The specifics of these requirements are determined in the spring.

Social Studies

The Middle School Social Studies curriculum focuses on intercultural studies, world geography, and United States history. Research, writing, and verbal skills in the Social Sciences are refined over the three years. The unfolding goal is for students to appreciate the diversity of human interaction over time and space on our planet.

Grade 6: The major focus of this course is to examine and begin to understand human groups using universalities of culture. Major world culture areas, principally the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and India are used to give the students their content areas for cross comparisons. The program then uses several categories of human behavior found in all known human groups to build an understanding of cultures, particularly of the three selected cultural regions. Students learn that the human beings inhabiting our planet may exhibit different behaviors from those they find familiar, but that we all create customs and traditions from

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the same cultural universals. In addition to the text (*World Cultures: A Global Mosaic*, Ahmad, Brodsky, Crofts, and Ellis), speakers from several cultures are invited to the classrooms, and a range of educational movies and documentaries on specific components of the three cultural regions are used. Individual field assignments include creative writing as well as computer-generated, artistic multimedia research projects. Class field trips ask students to apply their understanding of cultural universals to other culture groups. The year culminates in a very special project entitled “Create a Culture” that the students always enjoy.

Grade 7: The seventh grade curriculum includes a World Geography course that focuses on the symbiotic relationship between Earth and the human race. Geography, as a discipline, encompasses a variety of other subject areas, from Earth Sciences and Environmental Studies to Anthropology, History and Economics. As the year progresses, the students will discover that Geography is not “just about maps.”

The course is divided into several broad units, including Fundamental Geography. During this introductory stage the students master essential mapping skills and familiarize themselves with GIS and GPS applications. The Physical Geography unit follows, with an overview of weather/climate regions, vegetation and natural disasters. Population studies, urbanization, culture, and economic systems fall under the umbrella of Human Geography. During this unit, students are encouraged to consider Earth’s changing landscape and the challenge of striking a delicate balance between available resources and continued development. The final unit, Environmental Geography, relies heavily on current events, with special attention paid to alternative energy sources, geo-tourism, and the state of the Chesapeake Bay. The unit culminates with a three-day camping trip planned in conjunction with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Current events are discussed throughout the year and supplement the information covered in each unit. Students are also given the opportunity to study many of the aforementioned topics through films, field trips and research

projects. The individual and group projects provide an opportunity to delve further into specific elements of the material and to examine case studies related to the overarching theme of human-environment interaction. The main texts for the course are: *Foundations of Geography* and the *Nystrom World Atlas*.

Grade 8: The eighth grade U. S. history course is a study of modern American history from 1900 to the present. Major themes covered include immigration and urbanization, both World Wars, the Great Depression, the Cold War, race relations, and America’s present social and economic environment. Textual material (*America: History of Our Nation: Civil War to the Present* by James West Davidson and Michael B. Stoff) provides the framework of the curriculum, but a variety of other materials, such as excerpts from novels, autobiographies, primary resources, music and poetry are included to capture the essence of the American ethos. Students engage in role-playing, panel discussions, and write plays and poems to gain personal insight into eras we consider. Movies, guest speakers, documentaries, and student-created multimedia research projects also enhance students’ investigation of the history of the United States in the contemporary era. The course culminates with the production of a documentary that reflects one of several major events in modern U.S. history.

World Languages

Study of a world language is an important component of a liberal education, providing avenues for self-expression and self-fulfillment. Upon completion of three years of World Language study in the Middle School, students will appreciate the diversity of the world’s cultures, and understand how different people live and communicate, and attain a strong foundation for superior levels of language proficiency.

Middle School World language courses are designed to encourage rapid acquisition of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) necessary for

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meaningful communication in both written and spoken French, Russian, or Spanish.

The normal sequence of language study begins in the Middle School with three years of active foreign language instruction followed by continued language study in the Upper School. All language students who complete the Middle School program will receive one credit towards graduation, after having completed the ninth grade program in the same language. Students entering Friends in the seventh or eighth grade may join a language at the introductory level in a sixth grade class. At the end of their time in the Middle School, such students will consult with the World Language department to determine how to proceed with language in the Upper School. Some tutoring or other work may be necessary in such a case. Students who may not demonstrate a readiness to study a language in sixth grade may enroll in Learning Lab

French

The text used in sixth and seventh grade French is *C'est à Toi* Level I, published by EMC/Paradigm. Eighth grade French uses *C'est à Toi*, Level II, published by EMC/Paradigm. Accompanying the text are a workbook and an audio and video program. The pace of classroom activities is quick, with rapid drilling techniques, games and high-energy teaching.

Grade 6: Sixth grade French is an elementary language course that gives the student a foundation in basic French. Emphasis is on oral communication, with the majority of the teaching being conducted in French. Some topics that are covered are the family and pet, sports, school, hobbies, and places to go in the city. Students are expected to be able to use the vocabulary and grammar from any chapter in a variety of ways: in skits that they write and produce, in short compositions, and in simple speeches delivered in front of the class.

Grade 7: Seventh grade French is a continuation of the topics introduced in the sixth grade. Classes continue to be taught in French, and students are exposed to sophisticated grammar, such as the *passee compose* and direct and indirect object pronouns. Topics covered in the seventh grade include the weather, clothing, kinds of stores, the home, Paris and other cities in the French-speaking world. Students are encouraged to express themselves in French and writing becomes more important.

Grade 8: Eighth grade French is the culmination of the French program in the Middle School. Classes are taught entirely in French and student answers are expressed in the language. Students at this level are exposed to poetry and contemporary songs, and their knowledge of grammar is refined. Among the topics studied are French cuisine, the French school system, the fine arts, shopping and modes of transportation.

Russian

The text used in the Middle School program is *Golosa*, published by Pearson Prentice-Hall Publishing. An accompanying workbook and on-line audio and video program is used. As with French and Spanish, the pace of classroom activities is quick, and rapid drilling techniques, games and high-energy teaching styles are used.

Grade 6: Sixth grade Russian is an elementary language course that gives the student a foundation in basic Russian. Emphasis is on oral communication, with the majority of the teaching being conducted in Russian. The first few weeks are devoted to learning to read and write the Russian alphabet. Some topics covered are school, animals, family, clothes and places around town. Students are expected to be able to use the vocabulary and grammar in a variety of ways: in skits that they write and produce, in short compositions, and in simple speeches delivered in front of the class.

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Grade 7: Seventh grade Russian is a continuation of the topics introduced in the sixth grade. Classes are taught in Russian with some English. This course emphasizes communicative skills, using simple noun declensions, basic verb conjugations, and an expanding vocabulary. Topics covered in the seventh grade include: daily schedule and school, music and media, sports, Russian landmarks, transportation, and an ongoing study of Russian culture. Students are expected to perform skits and present short projects in conjunction with each unit covered in the textbook.

Grade 8: Eighth grade Russian is the culmination of the Russian program in the Middle School. Classes are taught increasingly only in Russian as the year progresses. Students continue to master conjugation and declension endings with an emphasis on expanding vocabulary and fluency. Topics covered include professions, classical music, holidays, weather and Siberia.

Spanish

The text used throughout the three years of Spanish study is *Navegando I* published by EMC paradigm. Accompanying the text are a workbook and an audio and video program. The pace of classroom activities is quick with rapid drilling techniques, games and high-energy teaching.

Grade 6: Sixth grade Spanish is an elementary language course that gives the student a foundation in basic Spanish. Emphasis is on oral communication, with the majority of teaching being conducted in Spanish. Some topics covered are the Hispanic world, school, transportation, food, and clothing. Students are expected to be able to use the vocabulary and grammar from any chapter in a variety of ways: in skits that they write and produce, in short compositions, and in simple speeches delivered in front of the class.

Grade 7: Seventh grade Spanish is a continuation of the topics introduced in the sixth grade. Classes continue to be taught in Spanish, and students are exposed to more sophisticated grammar, such as possessive adjectives, direct and indirect object pronouns and reflexive verbs. Topics covered in the seventh grade include family, chores around the house, food and table setting and rooms in a house. Students are encouraged to express themselves in Spanish and are asked to do more writing.

Grade 8: Eighth grade Spanish is the culmination of the Spanish program in the Middle School. Classes are taught entirely in Spanish and students express themselves in the language. This year the students are exposed to simple Spanish short stories and contemporary songs. Among the topics studied are technology, hygiene and health, Spain and Madrid.

Science

The Middle School Science department strives to inspire, excite, and motivate our students to be curious about the world around them. Our courses are designed to relate science to the real world so that students can see connections in their everyday lives. In science class, students are actively involved in laboratory explorations, such as investigating life with microscopes, discovering “explosive” characteristics of gases, and identifying global patterns of volcanoes and earthquakes.

Grade 6: Life science is an elementary biology course that explores science concepts and methods through a hands-on, activity-based program. Topics emphasized during the year are energy processes in plants and animals, populations, ecosystems, the Chesapeake Bay, the cell as the structural and functional unit of life, DNA and heredity, and human nutrition, which is done in cooperation with the sixth grade business math program. Investigations include human disease and nutrition. Students will collect data, write reports, keep an organized notebook, use a microscope, and learn to work effectively in groups.

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Grade 7: Physical science investigates the relationship between matter and energy through a laboratory/experimental approach. The course introduces science as a problem-solving activity, where students explore various challenging problems designed to invite creative approaches. The problem-solving approach is then applied to investigating the atom and chemical reactions in a lab-based program in which students develop an understanding of the nature of matter. The topic of energy is developed through similar hands-on activities by looking at heat energy and alternative energy sources. Graphing, organization, careful record keeping, and laboratory skills are emphasized.

Grade 8: Earth Science investigates the processes that make up and shape the Earth. The activity-based program draws from geology and astronomy. Students perform experiments, do research projects, keep organized notebooks and write reports and essays related to such topics as plate tectonics, geomorphology, rocks and minerals, the solar system and the universe. Students are asked to analyze, synthesize, and create models of how the earth operates from slow changes, such as plate movement, to more dramatic phenomena, such as earthquakes and volcanoes.

Mathematics

Problem-solving is the basic skill in mathematics; it is more than knowing what to do and getting the right answer. Problem-solving is being willing to tackle a problem even when the way to do it is unclear, persevering until one finds a reasonable solution. Therefore, the philosophy of the Middle School Mathematics Curriculum is to provide a systematic framework that teaches both the basic tools of mathematics and also the process by which to imaginatively apply these tools to solve real world problems.

Computers and calculators are used throughout the Middle School curriculum. They are seen as tools to help in solving math problems. We use computers for exploring geometric shapes and designs, for developing statistical graphing skills, and for modeling information with vertex and edge

networks. Calculators are used from sixth grade on, and they are considered necessary tools for everyday class work. In addition, we continue to develop computational fluency with respect to both mental arithmetic and pencil and paper algorithms. Throughout the curriculum, the teaching techniques and materials used are designed to serve as a strong motivation to influence the students' feelings for and success with mathematics.

Grade 6: Sixth grade mathematics provides students with an opportunity to grasp the meaning of mathematical ideas by relating them directly to situations they can understand. In this way, it is hoped the student will see math as a useful tool rather than a separate activity with its own arbitrary rules, cut off from the rest of life.

The year begins with an extensive study of specific problem-solving skills that are frequently used by mathematicians and are central to learning mathematics with an investigative approach. In this initial unit, students explore a wide variety of problems, puzzles, and mathematical games that encourage strategies, such as finding patterns, working backwards, constructing models, and creating systematic lists. Thereafter, rational numbers become the focus, as students use a variety of everyday contexts to solidify their conceptual understanding of fractions, decimals, and percents. Modifying cooking recipes provides a backdrop for detailed work with fractions, learning the metric system allows for much practice with decimals, and the economics of a student-run business simulation promotes "percent sense."

Throughout, the Singapore Math *block model* develops students' abilities to apply rational numbers to novel problem-solving situations. Much of the second half of the year is devoted to the study of two-dimensional geometry. Students use hands-on manipulatives and computer software to explore basic angle relationships, to compare and contrast families of polygons, and to develop a foundational understanding of area and perimeter. Several topics from discrete math and an introductory mini-unit on algebra round out the year.

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Grade 7: Seventh grade mathematics is designed to build on the concepts discovered by the students in sixth grade math and to take students to a level of understanding that enables them to be ready for the formal study of algebra in eighth grade. The course strengthens previously taught skills while focusing on greater depth of understanding in all strands. Estimation, mental arithmetic and calculator skills are taught in the context of numerous “real world” applications.

The course, which blends chapters from the Singapore Math series with curricular units developed at Friends School, includes review work with rational numbers, previewed concepts from first-year algebra, and many other topics that allow students to appreciate the breadth of mathematics. These in-depth units of study include number theory, probability, ratios and proportions, network analysis, and graphing and statistical interpretation of data. Numerous connections are made to other disciplines, such as Geography, Science, and Art. Throughout the year, problem-solving activities provide opportunities for integration of all topics and promote the development of strategies for solving complex, multi-step problems.

Grade 8: There are three options in eighth grade mathematics. Students may take Intro to Algebra, Algebra I, or Math Counts. All three courses cover algebraic expressions, solving equations and inequalities, linear functions and graphing. The Algebra I and Math Counts classes also explore additional topics including: systems of equations, exponents, polynomials and factoring, and quadratic equations and functions. Students from these classes will take Geometry in ninth grade.

The Intro to Algebra class combines a strengthening of basic skills while providing a solid foundation for Algebra. Students from this class will take Algebra I in ninth grade. Based on previous performance and interest, some eighth graders take the Math Counts class. This course incorporates preparation for the Math Counts Competition (a challenging nationwide math contest) into the class work and also covers several topics in more depth than the regular eighth grade course.

Art

Middle School Art meets twice a week for all three grades. Students are exposed to two-dimensional and three-dimensional concepts through a wide range of projects in a broad variety of media. All projects are intended to be accessible to all students and challenging to the most capable. All students are encouraged to improve while also understanding that everyone is capable of making art. Additional art time is available through elective Fine Arts classes.

Grade 6: Sixth grade classes work in a wide variety of media and in many different styles. Projects cover portrait and figure drawing, watercolor, sewing, collage, two-dimensional design, printmaking and ceramics. One class each week is taught by two teachers, allowing for close, personal instruction. All projects are intended to be accessible to all students and challenging for the strongest.

Grade 7: Seventh graders are exposed to a wide variety of artistic expression. Their course covers advertising art, ceramics, linear perspective, portraiture, abstract art and architecture. There is an increased emphasis on using sketches to develop ideas and on completing work in a scheduled amount of time.

Grade 8: Eighth graders rotate between two teachers. Each student has some time with each teacher and some time with two teachers where the class is divided. Projects include observational drawing, portrait drawing, political cartoons, fashion design, printmaking, ceramics, and acrylic painting. The rotations are fairly short. The abbreviated time helps students stay on task and finish work on time. This helps teach the kind of focus necessary to complete quality artwork.

General Music

Music is an integral part of the curriculum at Friends Middle School. Given our philosophy of educating the whole child

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and creating life-long learners, Middle School students take general music twice a week in all three grades, where they continue to work on singing, music literacy, focused listening, and critical thinking skills. The classes are active, and assessment is made in a variety of ways, keeping in mind the different strengths of the individual student. To further enhance their musical skills, all students have an opportunity to join the chorus, band and string orchestra. Most students choose to participate in at least one musical group. In-day rehearsals are an important part of the academic curriculum.

Grade 6: Students learn the fundamentals of music through hands-on experiences. Progressive sight-singing exercises, rhythm pieces, and bell melodies facilitate development of note-reading and rhythmic skills. In correlation with the sixth grade social studies classes, songs from a variety of cultures are taught, with an emphasis on singing with proper tone production. Movement is also incorporated to build coordination and strengthen musicianship skills. Students keep a “Listening Diary” in their notebooks. In conjunction with the Listening Diary, short listening excerpts are presented in each class to broaden students’ knowledge of different musical styles. Special units of study include an introduction to opera through *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in December; a world music and heritage unit, a composer research project, and a unit on *Oliver!* in late Spring.

Grade 7: Students continue to learn music fundamentals through classroom activities, which focus on the elements of music: melody, harmony, rhythm, form, and tone color. Students continue to learn the fundamentals of proper singing technique and apply this knowledge to songs of different styles. Music literacy is further developed through progressive exercises in rhythmic notation, sight-singing, and bell melodies. Students continue to keep a “Listening Diary” in their notebooks. Music textbooks (*World of Music* by Silver Burdett and *Music and You* by Macmillan) and supplemental materials are used. Special units of study include a patriotic music unit (September and October); an opera unit; an instrument unit; and a study of *Fiddler on the Roof* in the spring.

Grade 8: For many students, the eighth grade represents the last formal music class they will have (unless they elect to take music in high school). Thus, the curriculum is designed to provide lifelong skills: singing in tune, reading musical notation, understanding musical symbols, and exposure to music of different styles and origins. In the first part of the year, the students maintain a “Listening Diary.” Material is often coordinated with the other academic subjects. For example, in the fall, we study *Porgy and Bess*, which corresponds with the eighth grade theme on race relations. An in-depth study of Western Music follows; and in the spring, we correlate the study of the musical *West Side Story* with *Romeo and Juliet*.

Fine Arts Period

Fine Arts

Fine Arts Elective offers additional art time for those who elect it. It meets at the same time as the performance ensembles. Sixth Grade Fine Arts students alternate between ceramics and general fine arts. Seventh and eighth grade students are in mixed grade classes. They will rotate between ceramics, general fine arts, computer graphics, and three dimensional design.

Performance Ensembles

The performing arts are an integral part of the Friends School curriculum. Full-year Band, String Orchestra, and Chorus are offered for all students and meet during the Fine Arts periods each week. Students in all grades may elect to take Band, String Orchestra, Chorus, or any combination of these. Students are required to perform in all scheduled concerts. The concert dates will be provided in September. Absence from a performance (except in cases of emergency) is cause for a failing grade for that performance.

Physical Education

The required Middle School Physical Education program consists of a variety of units that include individual and lifetime sports, fitness and dance. Each grade has physical

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education 2-3 times per week. Students are graded on behavior, effort, and skill development using an A-F marking system. Another component of the grading system is wearing the required uniform (See below).

Classes are conducted on both a single-sex and coed basis. Throughout their Middle School experience, students will have exposure to the following activities: gymnastics, badminton, track and field, soccer, weight training, archery, lacrosse, tennis, softball, basketball, football, volleyball, field hockey, wrestling, team handball, and folk, square, aerobic, jazz, ballet, modern and social dance.

Middle School Library

The Middle School Library collection is over 10,000 items strong, with materials selected to support the school's curricula, as well as for individual enjoyment. Books (including e-Books), magazines, audio and video items comprise the collection. The school's Digital Library allows students access to hundreds of newspaper, journal and magazine titles, as well as multimedia (audio, visual, photographic, etc.) resources, and gives students the ability to browse items in the collections of all three libraries on campus.

The Library's Computer Lab contains equipment, hardware and software necessary for students to create a variety of media in support of the curricula. Digital still and video cameras, audio recording, video editing, graphics and photo manipulation software are all available. The Library staff works closely with the Technology Educator to provide an environment where students can explore a variety of creative means of expressing their ideas. The Library is open to students before school, during morning break, at lunch, and after school. The Library Staff is available from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm to assist the community with resources, questions and reader's advisory.

Information Literacy Curriculum

We live in an information-rich environment. With this richness comes the possibility of information overload. The philosophy of the Library and Research Program at Friends is to teach students to be critical evaluators, users, managers and producers of information in all its forms. This is achieved through collaboration between the Library and Middle School faculty, so that these skills may be taught within the context of what the students are already learning. The Middle School follows the 6-Step Research Process model, which has been adopted for Friends School. This model keeps the process and vocabulary consistent throughout all three schools, thereby preparing students with the abilities necessary to thrive in the Upper School.

Grade 6: Sixth grade students meet weekly in SpeechCraft Class, a unique combination of research, public speaking and theater, to begin laying the foundation of inquiry throughout their Middle School years. This class provides students with the opportunity to practice skills that will be used in all of their classes. Students learn about how to locate and evaluate information sources (including our Digital Library databases), how to use information ethically, and how to present the results of research in a meaningful way. The class employs a great deal of hands-on, kinesthetic learning techniques in order to increase the student's confidence and proficiency in these areas.

Grades 7 & 8: The seventh and eighth grade students attend collaboratively designed and co-taught classes. They hone their research skills by applying them to their research papers, presentations and other assignments. Students become increasingly skilled at manipulating the databases, and they learn to effectively search and evaluate the Web.

All students are encouraged to explore a variety of sources, and to test them for authority, bias, comprehensiveness, and relevance to their assigned tasks. They are also taught to be ethical users of information, providing proper credit to their sources, and above all, respecting the ideas of others.

Computer Technology

In today's increasingly technological world, a basic literacy with computer hardware and software is an essential component of a prepared education. Computers are well integrated into most academic subjects in the Middle School and are used to further the curricular goals in those areas. In the computer literacy classes, we seek to build a solid foundation of computer concepts and skills, so that students may feel comfortable using the computer as a tool for creative expression, communication and productivity.

During the three years of Middle School, students gain basic computer literacy, and an exposure to and appropriate mastery of a wide range of software programs and hardware devices in a Windows XP environment. With the addition of our dual platform Macintosh lab in the library, students will also have to opportunity to use the Apple operating system for specific projects.

Grade 6: Sixth grade computer is a foundation course. Students learn to navigate around the school's network and become comfortable with the programs available to them. Basic computer skills are mastered using the Office 2007 suite to learn word processing, as well as creating presentations and spreadsheets. Throughout the year students will work to develop their typing skills using correct form. Students are introduced to network applications, email, passwords, creating and use of folders, and adding and organizing bookmarks using Internet Explorer, "netiquette" and Internet safety. They develop research and study skills and work on several projects integrating technology into the curriculum.

Grade 7 & 8: Advanced computer skills are taught and integrated into the core curriculum in seventh and eighth grades. These skills include but are not limited to image editing, webpage building and design, use of blogging tools for academic purposes, digital photography and imaging using cameras and scanners, as well an introduction to digital video and video editing.

Group (Life Skills)

Group is an education program that addresses non-academic issues concerning early adolescence. Students have group once or twice a week for the entire year. A variety of teachers conduct these classes. The topics and discussions become more sophisticated as students progress through the Middle School. Sixth graders begin discussing their transition to the Middle School. Other topics in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades include peer relationships, social concerns, human sexuality, drug and alcohol use and abuse, Quakerism and social justice.

Study Skills

The teaching of study skills is integrated into all five academic courses at each grade level. The kinds of skills include time management, study habits, listening skills, memory techniques, reading comprehension (factual and critical), vocabulary development, reviewing for tests and quizzes. In the sixth grade, there is a particularly strong focus on note-taking and keeping an organized notebook. All sixth graders take a separate library, research, and speaking skills class with the Middle School Librarian.

Learning Specialist and Learning Lab

The Middle School Learning Specialist serves as a vital support for students, parents, and faculty. The Learning Specialist's main focus is to support and advocate for those students with learning needs. The Learning Specialist works closely with individual class teachers, the Principal, the Assistant Principal, and the Counselor as appropriate. For those students who have a diagnosed learning disability and have the documentation on file with the school, the Learning Specialist prepares an Individual Student Profile for the teachers and monitors accommodations as needed. The Learning Specialist will also help with outside referrals for those students who need educational testing and/or long term academic support.

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The Middle School Learning Specialist teaches three classes entitled Learning Lab for students who have learning needs and need extra support. Learning Lab, offered at all three grade levels, provides vocabulary enrichment, additional reading and writing instruction, reinforcement of study skills, and guided work on content area assignments. A variety of texts, workbooks, and teacher-made materials are used. Students taking Learning Lab do not take a World Language.

In addition to assisting those students in Learning Lab, the learning specialist also works with students outside of the Learning Lab, who need support in areas such as note-taking, organizational skills, test-taking skills, written expression, and reading comprehension. These students may be referred by a teacher, a parent, an advisor, or may be self-referred.

Meeting for Worship

Each grade attends Meeting for Worship once a week. Meeting takes place from 9:35 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Students enter the Meeting House in silence and sit down. Meeting is a time for quiet contemplation, reflection, and sharing of thoughts. It is not a time for debate or discussion. A period of silence after someone speaks allows those present to reflect on what has been said. Meeting ends with a handshake. Students remain silent until they leave the Meeting House.

Camping and Overnight Trips

Each student will participate in an overnight trip each year:

Grade 6: The sixth grade trip is to Camp Letts on the Eastern Shore in the early fall to create a class bonding experience.

Grade 7: The seventh grade takes its trip with guidance from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. They focus on developing in students a better understanding of the ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay, and strategies for preserving extremely important part of the mid-Atlantic.

Grade 8: The eighth grade takes a two- or three-day trip to Philadelphia each May in conjunction with their study of U.S. history and Quakerism.

After-School Athletics

The school offers a variety of seasonal interscholastic athletic opportunities. These include:

Fall: Football, boys and girls soccer, field hockey, instructional volleyball, instructional tennis

Winter: Boys basketball, wrestling, girls basketball, indoor/outdoor girls soccer, squash

Spring: Baseball, boys lacrosse, girls lacrosse, softball, and instructional tennis

The Middle School athletic program emphasizes skill development, sportsmanship, and teamwork. Teams will play an appropriate level of competition. Some but not all sports have “A” and “B” level teams grouped by ability. One of the goals of “A” and “B” level teams is to ensure that each player is able to participate in every contest. However, we may not be able to implement this goal in every game situation, depending on varying circumstances.

During after-school athletics, students should be sure to place all possessions in their locked lockers, in the cafeteria, or in their cubbies in the Middle School Building.



Friends School

OF BALTIMORE

The world needs what our children can do.