

Humanities Course Descriptions

Social Studies

***Social Studies 6:** In the History of the Eastern Hemisphere course students will learn about early people, how ancient Egypt, India, China, Mesopotamia, and classical Greece and Rome set the stage in the Eastern Hemisphere for the events unfolding in our world today. Students will explore belief systems across time, the foundations of democracy and the impact geography had upon human societies both past and present. This course will integrate the skills of reading, writing and research into a variety of projects designed to build a deeper understanding of grade level essential questions. Throughout this course students will use geographic reasoning, comparison and contextualization to see historical patterns to better understand the rise and fall of civilizations throughout history.

Students meet for Social Studies every day for either 41 minutes (afternoon block) or 62 minutes (morning block). However, teachers and teams have the flexibility to meet for longer blocks of time (up to three forty one minute periods) or with different students depending on the projects or celebrations of student work going on within each team.

***Social Studies 7:** In the History of Early America through the Civil War course students learn what it means to be an American. Students explore how our nation came to be what it is today by examining America's origins including: native people, European explorers, English colonists and African slaves in the first half of the year. Next, students will learn about revolutionary ideas that transformed the political, social and economic fabric of American society culminating in the turmoil of a bloody Civil War that threatened to divide our nation. By incorporating the New York State Common Core shifts for Social Studies, it is our goal to engage in student centered learning practices where reading, writing, and research skills are fostered and American history is "uncovered" through student inquiry and the interpretation primary and secondary sources. Social Studies 7 meets every day in 41-minute learning periods.

***Social Studies 8:** In the US History from the Civil War to the present course students learn how our nation rebuilt after the Civil War, underwent an industrial revolution and progressed through a series of social, political and economic reforms and ultimately became a major influence in our world today. Students will look deeply at our past to understand our present, focusing on issues of social justice, government & politics, foreign relations & war, and the role economic policies played in shaping our world. By incorporating the New York State Common Core shifts for Social Studies, it is our goal to engage in student centered learning practices where reading, writing, and research skills are fostered and American history is "uncovered" through student inquiry and the interpretation primary and secondary sources. We also want our students to understand their role as active citizens in our government and how their voices can make a difference at the local, state, national, and international levels. Social Studies 8 meets every day in 41-minute learning periods.

English Language Arts (ELA)

***ELA 6:** Our sixth grade ELA program incorporates and builds upon the Teachers College Reading and Writing Workshop, with an intense focus on students writing and reading as much as possible in school while teachers provide students with targeted feedback, differentiated coaching, support, or enrichment. While our teachers use the Teachers College units of study, we adapt them by tying in our grade level essential questions to make interdisciplinary connections and promote deeper, more powerful learning experiences. Student readers will have opportunities to engage in Social Issues book clubs, complex nonfiction reading and even Fantasy book clubs by the year's end. It is our belief that if we provide appropriately challenging readings that are interesting to each individual student they will read more and enjoy what they read. We are also committed to teaching writing and research skills to help students become successful in all classes. Students will write personal narratives, literary essays, fantasy writings and informational writings to better hone their craft. It is our belief that the more students research, read, and write in middle school, the better prepared they will be for a life of reading, writing, communicating, and success!

All students receive 41-minute or 62 minute periods of ELA daily (alternating) so that students have more time for reading and writing. Again, these periods are flexible as teachers/teams may manipulate meeting times to address the needs of students or to create specialized learning opportunities for students.

***ELA 7:** Students continue their life long journey as readers and writers in our grade seven ELA program, continuing on with our Teachers College Reading and Writing program. Our goal is to continue to push students to read and write as much as possible while in school and more at home with our teachers serving as coaches and mentors. This allows us to differentiate our approach for all students, providing varied levels of enrichment and support where needed. Our continued goal is to inspire our students to love reading and writing while preparing them to use their skills as writers to disseminate important information, share their viewpoints, and make arguments for causes they believe strongly in. Student readers will engage in Historical Fiction book clubs, argument reading, poetry, complex nonfiction texts and book clubs of their own choosing. We are also committed to teaching writing and research skills through realistic fiction, argument based essays, informational writing, poetry and selected pieces of their own choosing. It is our belief that the more students are given a voice to research, read, and write about things they care about in middle school, the better prepared they will be for a life of reading, writing, communicating, and success! All students receive 41-minute or 62 minute periods of ELA daily (alternating) so that students have more time for reading and writing.

***ELA 8:** In their last year at the middle school, we push our students to read and write as much as possible, focusing on analytical skills, comparative skills, and the ability to develop and support strong arguments with evidence from the texts they read. We continue our work with the Teachers College Reading and Writing program but with an eye and additional focus on preparing our students for the rigor of high school level English classes. Therefore, we push students to write as much as possible while in school but increasingly push them to write and read more at home. Our teachers still provide coaching and mentoring for 8th grade readers and writers but since our ELA periods are 41-minutes we expect students to seek out individual conferences to further advance their reading and writing skills. Student readers will engage in critical reading of non-fiction, open genre book clubs, short stories and various other challenging texts. We are also committed to teaching writing and research skills through literary essays, feature articles, historical fiction and argument based writing to further develop their voice and craft. It is our belief that the more students are given a voice and greater autonomy to research, read, and write about things they care about in middle school, the better prepared they will be for a life of reading, writing, communicating, and success!