

**Moorestown Friends Middle School
Curriculum Guide for 2008-2009**

The Middle School curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students who are going through important personal stages of development socially, academically, physically, and intellectually. To this end, the Middle School strives to create an environment that helps students to become enthusiastic about their work at school at the same time that they develop skills that will serve them not only in the Middle School but in the Upper School, in college, and beyond. During this period of self-discovery, students are presented with a range of opportunities for learning about themselves and about the world in which they live. Middle School is a time to learn and to enjoy the process of learning.

Table of Contents

English	2
Mathematics	3
Social Studies	5
Science	7
World Languages.....	8
Music	9
Art	11
Woodshop	13
Health	13
Quakerism	14
Physical Education.....	16
Computer	16
Advising	17
Activities.....	18
Intensive Learning	18

English

Grade 5

Fifth grade English focuses on developing interpretive and critical reading skills using a variety of literature. Writing assignments include note taking, summarizing, journal entries, research reports, and creative compositions. Grammar is stressed throughout the year with the study of the sentence and the parts of speech. Theme development, proofreading, editing, and spelling are also emphasized.

Texts: Running Out of Time (summer), Old Yeller, Perloo the Bold, Knots in My Yo-yo String, The Golden Goblet, The Voyage of Patience Goodspeed, and The Best Loved Poems of Jackie Onassis. Students will also read at least one other book of their choosing and will study Houghton Mifflin's English grammar.

Grade 6

Sixth grade English focuses on reading a variety of literature and on identifying plot, setting, and character. The students' writing exercises emphasize strong, interesting sentences, paragraphs, essays, and creative pieces. A year-long study of grammar and vocabulary complements this emphasis. During class discussions, students are encouraged to offer insights, to support ideas with specific details, and to ask questions.

Texts: The House with a Clock in its Walls (summer), The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Animal Farm, The Great Gilly Hopkins, Twenty-one Great Stories, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle, A Christmas Carol, and selected stories, poems, and essays. Students will also study Houghton Mifflin's English grammar.

Grade 7

Seventh grade English broadens the study of literature to include a sampling of various genres: science fiction, classic fiction, historical fiction, plays, poetry, and short stories. Through reading, research projects, and presentations, students learn about theme, plot, setting, conflict, mood, and character analysis. Essay writing tailored to fit each literature unit encourages the development of writing skills. To further oral presentation skills, a special unit on story telling is included. In addition, grammar and vocabulary lessons supplement the study of literature.

Texts: One Eyed Cat (summer) The Light in the Forest, Out of the Dust, A Raisin in the Sun, The Giver, The Moves Make the Man, Crispin: The Cross of Lead, Little Worlds (short stories) and Glencoe English grammar.

Grade 8

Eighth grade English involves an extensive examination of underlying themes in literature. Throughout the year students are encouraged to discover connections between the written word, society, and their own lives. A wide scope of literature and activities is used to aid in the understanding of the concepts of justice, tolerance, and moral decision making. Students read fiction, non-fiction, and plays, as well as discuss current events. Grammar is covered through direct discussion and within the context of student writing assignments.

Texts: Close to Shore (summer), Into Thin Air, Your Name is Renee, To Kill a Mockingbird, A Midsummer Night's Dream, poetry, essays, and Houghton Mifflin's English grammar, and Glencoe Language Arts Grammar and Language Workbook.

Grade 8 Speech: in the spring, eighth graders will prepare and deliver a persuasive speech. Students will choose a topic that is of personal interest and that is related to the themes in course literature. They will be asked first to research the topic and to write an essay. Students will then prepare a speech from the essay, concentrating on the written and oral skills needed to present their topic clearly and convincingly.

Mathematics

Grade 5

The 5th grade mathematics program is designed as preparation for the rigorous math and science programs that students will encounter in sixth grade and beyond. Students are expected to have mastered basic math facts, and the focus is on exposing students to more complex computation. Some of the sections covered include number and operation sense, graphing and displaying data, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of fractions and decimals, ratio and percent, and an introduction to algebra.

Text: Scott Foresman - Addison-Wesley Mathematics

Grade 6

In grade six, students work on mastering computation with whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and integers. Simple to complex numerical expressions are evaluated, and algebraic expressions are simplified, all giving students much practice with following the order of operations and applying the basic number properties. Much time is devoted to critical thinking, problem solving skills, and showing work process in an organized and

thorough way. Students learn to solve problems using ratios, proportions, and percents. One and two step equations and inequalities are solved, always showing step by step transformations. There is a study of basic geometry concepts regarding angles, lines, polygons, perimeter, and area. Finally, students are introduced to linear functions, graphing on a rectangular coordinate plane, and numerous ways to display and interpret data.

Text: McDougal Littell Middle School Math – Course 2

Grade 7 (Regular)

In the regular section of grade seven math, the major objectives include having students' master operations with integers and rational numbers, exposing students to major topics of algebra and geometry, and developing critical thinking and problem solving skills. Major topics include doing integer operations; using variables, rational numbers, geometric figures, number theory, ratio and percent; and solving and graphing equations and inequalities.

Text: McDougal Littell Pre-Algebra

Grade 7 (Advanced) and Grade 8 (Regular)

The advanced grade seven and regular grade eight mathematics programs are a comprehensive introduction to algebra, from basic simplifying algebraic expressions to solving and graphing quadratic equations. Areas of focus include algebraic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as well as polynomials, factoring, inequalities, systems of equations in two variables, rational and irrational numbers, solving equations (linear, radical, quadratic), and problem solving. Students taking this course in seventh grade must have exhibited a high level of competence in their sixth grade math course as they will be introduced to many new concepts and will be expected to progress at a rapid pace throughout the school year. Students taking this course in eighth grade have an additional year of pre-algebra to make the transition a bit easier to this level of algebraic thought process.

Text: Introductory Algebra (Bittinger and Keedy)

Grade 8 (Advanced)

In preparation for continued studies in mathematics, students in the eighth grade advanced section will be expected to build on all the basic concepts learned in the previous course, Introduction to Algebra. They will take each concept and develop a much deeper understanding by solving complex problems in each area. Students will focus on thinking abstractly,

developing organizational skills in mathematics, and using their accumulated knowledge in realistic application problems. The focus on solving these realistic application problems is a priority in this course. Students will be expected to make connections, throughout the year, with concepts learned in their sixth, seventh, and eighth grade math courses. They will also be expected to show their work process in a complete and organized way. Students completing the eighth grade advanced math course will be prepared to take Algebra II, also at an advanced level, in grade nine.

Text: Algebra, Structure and Method, Book 1 (Houghton Mifflin)

Social Studies

Grade 5: Civilization and the Ancient World

Fifth grade Social Studies begins with an examination of the underlying forces that led to the advent of civilization. With a focus on the basic needs that bind humans into communities and the influence of environment upon culture, the class explores the earliest river valley civilizations: the Sumerian city-states, Ancient Egypt, and the Indus Valley. The year continues with an exploration of the roots of Western civilization by examining the birth of monotheism with the Hebrew kingdoms and the beginnings of humanistic thought in Classical Greece and its dissemination throughout the Hellenistic Greek world. The course concludes with an investigation of the rise of Ancient Rome and its transition from Republic to Empire. Students are taught note-taking skills, reading maps and graphs, and how to interpret drawings and photographs. Reports, oral presentations, group projects, and field trips are integral components of this course.

Text: History of Our World: The Early Ages

Grade 6: The Middle Ages and World Religions

Building upon the basic concepts about culture and civilization begun in grade 5, sixth grade Social Studies continues to explore the central issues of cultural identity and cultural change. Moving chronologically from the end of Rome to the beginnings of the modern world, this course focuses on the beliefs and influences of four main world religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. Students explore the historical and environmental factors leading to events that transformed the world from a set of relatively isolated civilizations to a world increasingly connected by trade and technology. The course ends with the world on the brink of the age of exploration and the explosive changes it brought about. Throughout the course, students will consider how religious belief shapes identity and how the world's religions are both agents for change and for tradition. Basic

social studies skills of gathering, organizing, and presenting historical data remain the skill focus in sixth grade.

Text: History of Our World: The Early Ages

Grade 7: The Atlantic World

Seventh grade Social Studies shifts focus from the Eastern hemisphere to the Western hemisphere with an exploration of American cultures from 1300 to 1800. The Atlantic World refers to cultural encounters that center around trade across the Atlantic Ocean. Using this framework throughout the course, students continue their investigation of cultural identity and cultural change during this early stage of the modern era. After an initial study of the impacts of European exploration of the Americas, students study the growth of British colonies in North America. A main portion of this course focuses on the early history of the United States, from colonization to the establishment of our republic. The course ends with a study of the spread of liberal ideals to Europe and the Caribbean with the French and the Haitian revolutions. Basic social studies skills of gathering, organizing, and presenting historical data remain the skill focus in seventh grade.

Text: Modern World History: Patterns of Interactions

Grade 8: Topics in United States History

MFS eighth grade students will be led to engage in problem solving as they look at Civics through the lens of the American historical experience. Students will learn how to hypothesize, gather data, and evaluate their findings, and they will be encouraged to ask and to answer questions in a discovery process similar to the Socratic method. Students will be introduced to the organization and operation of government at the local, state, and national levels and will be asked to identify some of the challenges in United States foreign policy and other global issues facing Americans in all areas. Economics and geography will also be important components of this course. Students will be given the opportunity to assess their own behavior and to gauge how well they are contributing to any given group effort. The eighth grade American Government curriculum stresses the need to reach all students through the use of activities that stimulate multiple types of intelligences.

Text: American Government and Politics Today: 2007-2008

Science

Grades 5-8

Based on the *Premier Science* curricula, science classes in grades five through eight feature inquiry activities designed to provide individual and collaborative learning opportunities in the three foundational areas of science - Earth Sciences, Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences. Each semester, MS science students study one unit in one of these three content areas. Content within each unit is divided into clusters that address specific recommendations of the National Science Education Standards and Benchmarks, a derivative of the National Science Education Content Standards. Individual (tests) and group (project reports) assessments are designed to be both formative and summative and culminate at semester's end with a performance assessment that is exhibited at the annual Science and Engineering Exposition.

Area	Grade	Unit	Cluster	Cluster	Cluster	Cluster
Life Science	5	Diversity and adaptations	Classification systems	Similarities and differences	Common ancestry	Biological adaptations
Earth Sciences	5	Earth – The water planet	Water, water everywhere	The Earth's atmosphere	Weather and climate	
Life Sciences	6	Populations & ecosystems	Systems	Energy transfer	Limiting factors	
Physical Sciences	6	Structure and changes of matter	Atoms	Elements	Properties of elements and compounds	Characteristics of chemical reactions
Earth Sciences	7	Biography of the Earth	Scientific inquiry	The lithosphere	The rock cycle	
Earth Sciences	7	Earth in the Solar System	Objects and orbits	Gravity, the Moon, and tides	Stars and galaxies	
Life Sciences	7	Genetics and heredity	Reproduction	Probability and inheritance	Heredity	
Life Sciences	8	Behavior and regulation	Regulation	Human reproduction	Protection from disease	Behavior
Physical Sciences	8	Forces and motions	Identifying forces	Forces at work	Objects in motion	Support and movement
Physical Sciences	8	Transfer of energy	Transfer of heat	Energy from the sun	Transferring electrical energy	

World Languages

Grade 5

Latin: Students begin this course with an overview of the history of language, including language families and the Romance languages. In learning the basics of grammar (i.e. gender/number agreement, subject/verb agreement, prepositional phrases, word order, etc.) and understanding derivatives, students will get a feel for how language functions and will get a greater sense of the language process. Cultural topics are equally important. These include the calendar and *Julius Caesar* and *Pyramus and Thisbe* as plays. The year culminates with a Roman festival.

Chinese Culture: Students are introduced to the four tones used in spoken Chinese and the stroke order for writing Chinese characters. They will gain basic experience with spoken Chinese through the use of general Chinese phrases and skills such as counting. Through research, hands-on activities, and field trips, students learn about both ancient and modern Chinese culture and history. Students gain knowledge of the issues and environmental concerns that modern China faces as it enters the twenty-first century. The contributions of China throughout history and China's importance in our global community are emphasized throughout the year.

Grade 6

Students are introduced to the fundamental grammar and vocabulary of Chinese, French, and Spanish. Building on language acquisition skills acquired in fifth grade, students will learn the nuances of grammar in each language and continue to build a working vocabulary in Chinese, French, and Spanish. The focus is on building confident communicative skills while increasing student awareness of and appreciation for Chinese, French, and Spanish cultures in different parts of the world.

Grades 7 and 8

French: Students begin the equivalent of high school level French I in grade 7 and continue through grade 8 with a progression of skill building. Language skills evolve with increased emphasis on writing, spelling, and grammar; full sentence response in speaking as well as in oral presentations; reading narratives; and listening comprehension. Significant time is devoted to acquainting students with the history and culture of francophone countries. French is spoken in the classroom to the greatest degree possible. Upon the successful completion of French I (C or better for the year), students will enroll in French II for ninth grade.

Spanish: Students begin the equivalent of high school level Spanish I in grade 7 and continue through grade 8 with a progression of skill building. Language skills evolve with increased emphasis on writing, spelling, and grammar; full sentence response in speaking as well as in oral presentations; reading narratives; and listening comprehension. Significant time is devoted to acquainting students with the history and culture of Spanish speaking countries. Spanish is spoken in the classroom to the greatest degree possible. Upon successful completion of Spanish I (C or better for the year), students enroll in Spanish II for ninth grade.

Music

Grade 5

Fifth grade students are given a year long experience that explores both the performance and academic facets of music. Students choose to participate in the Fifth Grade Choir, the Fifth Grade String Ensemble, or the Fifth Grade Band. Students also meet in a general music course where they are introduced to rudimentary music theory elements, music history, basic ear training, and the sociological functions of the art form in western culture.

Grade 6

During one quarter of the year, sixth grade students have general music instruction. During this class, which meets every day, students continue their study of music theory begun in fifth grade (focusing solely on diatonic practices), western music history, and the functions of various musical genres and forms. Students explore the first three western musical periods of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque. At the close of the quarter, students are introduced to compositional approaches and use computer software to produce their own creative works.

Grade 7

Grade 7 music class offers students a basic knowledge of the components of music, including sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, and growth/ form. Students solidify their ability to identify rhythms, including whole, half, quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes and corresponding rests. Students will develop a thorough understanding of treble clef and ledger line notes. Students will learn to recognize intervals both visually and aurally. Students will briefly review instrumental timbres, including aural and visual recognition. Particular emphasis will be placed on knowing musical terminology, dynamics, and reading musical symbols. The culminating project requires each student to analyze varying styles of music and to describe it using the knowledge they have gained, including a description of the song's genre, tempi, dynamics, time period/ dates of composition,

instrumentation/ vocals, solo sections, texture, repeated intervals, phrase length, time signature, lyrics, form/ structure, and a detailed background on the performer/ band/ composer.

Grade 8

Grade 8 music classes begin with a review of rhythms, treble clef pitches, intervals, dynamic markings, and musical terms/ symbols. Students learn bass clef and ledger lines. Students do regular music journaling, in which they write about the music of different styles and time periods as they listen, using the musical terms they have learned. The culminating activity involves students doing a fifteen minute presentation for the class on a music topic of their choice. This can include music in commercials, a specific musical group, movie music, Broadway shows, and other topics.

Middle School Performing Arts Programs

It is among the goals of the Arts Department at Moorestown Friends School for every student to continue to experience the thrill of participation in performing arts throughout their Middle School years. In addition to performance opportunities in theater, instrumental music, and vocal music, students also undertake academic studies in the performing arts for all four years. Music history, music theory, ear training, and sociological context are all explored every year in the music courses.

Middle School Performing Groups

Instrumental Music: Middle school instrumental ensembles perform at the Winter and Spring concerts. These groups include the following:

- Fifth Grade Band: Fifth grade band musicians rehearse twice every six days.
- Middle School Band: Thai group of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade rehearses twice every six days.
- Middle School String Ensemble: This group of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade musicians rehearses twice every six days.

Choral Music:

Fifth Grade Choir: Fifth Grade Choir is open to fifth grade students who want to develop their singing skills. Rehearsals focus on developing healthy vocal techniques including tuning, correct posture, and breathing. Literature is taken from a mix of beginning level one and two part choral repertoire.

Students rehears twice in every six day cycle, and perform ant the Winter and Spring concerts and at other community events.

Middle School Choir: This group is open to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who enjoy choral singing. The group rehears during Middle School activity twice every six days and performs at the Winter concert in December and at the Spring concert in May.

Theater

Currently we offer theater during three activity periods. Two of the three activity days focus on preparing a script for performance, so students who are interested in this facet of theater need to enroll in both of these activity days. This ensemble learns about the audition and rehearsal process as we work towards a final presentation. It is very much a process driven activity, and students engage in blocking, character analysis, and line memorization.

The third activity day (the independent class) focuses on the improvisational aspect of theater. This class participates in activities that are designed around improv and basic theater games.

Art

Grade 5

In grade 5 Art, experimentation, individualized approach, and creativity are encouraged in all assignments. Classes are taught with a variety of teaching methods such as lectures, demonstrations, discussions, brainstorming, and hands-on materials. Critique sessions occur periodically throughout the assignments and at the closure of units to help determine problem areas and to encourage appreciation of diversity in the style that each child brings to the assignments.

Grade 5 art projects may include any of the following disciplines and media: printmaking; ceramics; textiles; acrylic painting; water color painting; still life drawing, which focuses on placement and shading techniques; and a variety of mixed media projects.

Grade 6

The sixth grade year in Art begins with an opportunity to create abstract expressionist paintings with a partner based on four different types of music. Students are instructed to capture the mood of the music through the use of color and expressive line on paper. This project promotes creativity and spontaneity as well as a discourse on cooperation. Next they engage in an exercise on value by creating a value scale from their expressive paintings.

Students learn how to use a grid as a drawing aid. Skills in measuring, using a ruler, proportion, scale and judging relative distances will be emphasized. Gridding helps develop overall drawing skills by training the individual's eye to break down images into simple/basic shapes and reproduce them. The entire class will then create a large-scale mural using the gridding method. This project emphasizes cooperative skills, measuring, drawing, and mixing colors.

Finally, a unit on 3-D mask making is presented. After discussions on the history and purpose of masks, students choose animal features that characterize a part of their personality to reproduce as a mask. Students use plaster strips formed around a base and fabricated amatures to construct their mask. The last step is to paint, varnish, and add any other collage elements such as fabric, yarns, metal, and natural materials to the finished mask.

Sixth graders also have scheduled independent art times during which they can explore what the art room has to offer and experiment with materials.

Art History occurs once a week, encompassing the beginning of Modern Painting from Impressionism through Expressionism and Pointillism. These units are presented with slide viewing, discussion, and a May trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art to view a number of the paintings studied in class.

Grade 7

The year in seventh grade Art begins with a discussion of the different types of sculpture, particularly relief sculpture. The sculpture unit stresses the processes involved in producing a sculpture, from building the sculpture in plasticene clay through mixing plaster for the mold, casting the mold in white slip, under glazing the cast sculpture, and finally firing the sculpture. This is a lengthy project but one that addresses the multi-faceted steps of producing an additive relief sculpture from scratch.

The focus then turns to 2-D and a unit on perspective drawing. One and two point perspective drawings are explained and completed, and, if time permits, a perspective drawing or painting of their own design is created.

Art History is taught once a week with a continuation of the history of modern painting, which includes Fauvism, Cubism, and a unit on Pablo Picasso.

Grade 8

The major focus of eighth grade Art is drawing. Using the book Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain, by Dr. Betty Edwards, the eighth graders are taken through a number of drawing exercises constructed to strengthen their observational skills by utilizing the often dormant abilities of the right hemisphere of the brain. These exercises include, but are not limited to, upside down drawing and pure contour drawings. This is followed by a unit on portraiture with a final pencil portrait drawing.

Art History is taught once a week, and the focus is on Dadaism, Marcel Duchamp, and Surrealism, particularly Salvatore Dali. A culminating trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art occurs in May.

Woodshop

Grades 5-8

Woodshop is a unique program for Middle Schoolers that gives them the opportunity to work with their hands, to create something, and to see a product that is both functional and physical. Besides learning about shop safety and shop rules, students gain knowledge of cutting edges (saws, drills, and planes), assembling, finishing, design, and layout. With the major focus on "What is wood?", students complete a variety of projects: a container (grade 6), a toy (grade 7), and a piece of small furniture (grade 8). Fifth graders work on design technology, where they learn techniques of structure, support, measurement, and assembling. Their major projects are a wooden frame with wheels and a means of locomotion and a solid wood coping saw cut out design.

Health

The Health curriculum in the Middle School is designed to educate students in grades 5 through 8 about a broad range of health topics and issues that are age appropriate and pertinent to their current health interests and needs. Information presented and discussed enables students to make informed decisions relative to their health, lifestyle, and ultimately to the quality of their life. A holistic approach to health, viewing the influences and substantial relationships among the physical, mental, and social components of health and their impact on the student's overall level of well-being, is a primary focus.

The Middle School program is part of a comprehensive, sequential health curriculum that continues through the Upper School. Topics are presented at

intervals to accommodate a timely introduction to the material and an opportunity for subsequent review of the subject matter in future years. This format enables teachers to present a topic during the Middle School years in a manner that students appreciate, relate to, and understand, with the knowledge that the same major areas will be reviewed and studied in greater depth and detail in later years as part of the Health curricular format.

Specific topics at the various grade levels include the following:

Grade 5 - Physical development and maturation, hygiene. In conjunction with the Health curriculum is additional classroom instruction relative to the onset of puberty.

Grade 6 - Nutrition, and substance use, misuse and abuse.

Grade 7 – Illegal drugs, personal care, and relationships.

Grade 8 - Communicable and noncommunicable diseases and life skills.

Text: Totally Awesome Health (Meiks, Heit)

Quakerism

Quakerism is an integral part of life at Moorestown Friends School. It undergirds the school's philosophy and, therefore, its attitude towards education and young people. Quakers believe that life has a spiritual dimension and that understanding and developing that dimension is as fundamental to education as mathematics or reading. In the Middle School, the Quaker concern for spiritual education is transmitted in a number of ways: through service activities; through formal classes; through attention to Quakerism's central values of integrity, harmony, equality, simplicity, and community; and through a deep commitment on the part of the staff to the nurture of the life of the spirit.

A Quaker school does not aim to create Quakers but rather to help young people become aware of the "inward light", that spiritual presence in all of us that provides guidance and direction for living in our complicated world. The school believes that the religious tradition of each student is strengthened by the understanding of Quaker history, faith, and practice. One of the strengths of a Quaker education is its focus on empowering students to develop and use their talents and gifts within a caring community.

The practices of Quakerism, especially the Meeting for Worship, give young people powerful tools for spiritual growth. Meeting for Worship is the

setting in which that growth is nurtured. The students gather silently to reflect together. Sometimes meeting begins with a story or brief talk on a topic of concern to the community; we encourage students to speak from their hearts if so moved; always we let the silence work on us together. Despite the natural restlessness of Middle Schoolers, this quiet time together provides us with focus, with space to be reflective, and with a peaceful center to our busy week. Returning graduates will often single out Meeting for Worship as the most formative part of their education at Moorestown Friends School. Eighth grade students provide leadership for Meeting for Worship by conducting an introduction to Meeting for Worship once a month, greeting at the door, and closing worship.

In the classroom, we offer Quakerism as a formal course for one period a week all year in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Content includes: learning how to use silent worship; introduction to ethics; investigation of the lives of a variety of "Peaceful Heroes"; introduction to the major Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship; practice in conflict resolution; service projects; and exploration of the varieties of religious experience. During middle school, students can expect to learn meditation techniques, to study several well-known Quakers whose lives make real the testimonies listed above, to develop and participate in service projects, to learn the causes and remedies for injustices in the world, to be challenged to think about their behavior in light of the belief that we are all valued members of a community, to learn strategies for resolving conflict and a Quaker approach to group decision making, and to learn about the religions of the world, especially about those of the students at Moorestown Friends School. The eighth grade course is built around the theme of discovering how to effectively protect the religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment and to treat those of other faiths with dignity while still valuing our own faith traditions.

The Examined Life Program: The Examined Life Program is, along with academic rigor, one of the twin pillars of the MFS Strategic Plan. Applying Socrates' idea that "the unexamined life is not worthy living", we developed a set of ideas and outcomes about the nature of an examined life. Four foundational aspects of The Examined Life at MFS form the basis of our work with students. In the classroom and at school events we teach students 1) to think critically; 2) to behave in an ethical manner, to think about the ethical implications of their actions, and to use critical thinking to understand and respond to ethical dilemmas; 3) to be open to the spirit, something greater than ourselves that informs behaviors and decisions; and 4) to respond to difficult experiences with resilience. These areas are incorporated into all Middle School Quakerism courses.

Physical Education

Physical Education in the Middle School consists of a wide variety of activities that focus on physical fitness, furthering sport skills, cognitive development, and lifetime recreational pursuits. To gain a broad foundation, students in the Middle School are presented with activities that encompass individual sports (such as tennis), traditional team sports (including soccer, flag football, floor hockey, basketball, team handball, and lacrosse), and lifetime recreational activities (such as Frisbee games, volleyball, softball, and cooperative games). Additional offerings are presented as interest arises. All Physical Education classes include appropriate warm up and fitness related activities. Of equal importance are the development of sportsmanship, cooperation, self-discipline, self-esteem, and a positive attitude towards physical fitness and physical endeavors.

Computer

The goal of the computer curriculum is to integrate computer use with curriculum in other areas while developing students' technology skills and knowledge. At each grade level, students focus on a particular area of computer use. When possible, computer activities take advantage of opportunities to function as extensions of other Middle School courses. For grades 6, 7, and 8, computer class meets once per week throughout the school year; in the fifth grade, students will meet alternate weeks in the computer lab and in the library.

Grade 5

The fifth grade class will focus on the development of office skills and continue reinforcement of proper keyboarding techniques. Students will receive an introduction to using the Internet and online library resources. They will develop online research skills and create a bibliography. They will also create a personal web page, basic Excel spreadsheet, brochure, and PowerPoint presentation.

Grade 6

The sixth grade class will continue to develop proper keyboarding technique to increase speed and accuracy. They will learn advanced word processing and online research skills. They will create PowerPoint presentations and Excel spreadsheets. They will also use graphic editing programs and multimedia programs to enhance school projects in other subject areas.

Grade 7

The seventh grade class will continue with the development of MS Office and keyboarding skills. Focus will be on using online resources to which the MFS library subscribes. They will research projects in a core curriculum class and create final projects in PowerPoint and Excel. Additionally they will create multimedia projects, using digital cameras, scanners, and movie making software. They will be required to create bibliographies for all projects.

Grade 8

The eighth grade class will continue with the development of MS Office and keyboarding skills. Focus will be on using the online resources to which the MFS library subscribes. They will research projects in a core curriculum class and create final projects in Power Point and web development software. Students will create bibliographies in MLA format for all projects. Students will be introduced to Adobe Photoshop and a graphic editing program, and they will create a multimedia project using digital cameras, video cameras, iPods, scanners, and movie making software.

Advising

Each Middle School student is assigned an advisor, a teacher who maintains close contact with the student to monitor academic and social progress. Advisors in grade 5 are the homeroom teachers, who are responsible for their homeroom classes. Each advisor in grade 6, 7, and 8 is responsible for 10 or 11 advisees with whom a strong positive relationship is nurtured. Goals of the Middle School advising program include helping students to organize their time effectively, to become responsible members of the community, and to develop a positive attitude towards themselves and their work. Besides maintaining close contact with advisees and advisee parents, Middle School advisors meet as a team every week with the Middle School Director in order to discuss plans, to communicate concerns, and to solve problems that may arise throughout the course of the year.

Of course, a Middle School girl or boy may go to any teacher with particular questions or concerns, but the official advisor is there to help students and parents in any way that he or she is able. Parents should feel free to call a student's advisor, teacher, or the Middle School Director when necessary.

Activities

Energetic and eager to be involved in a wide range of different activities, Middle School boys and girls participate in numerous non-academic clubs called Activities. The Middle School activity block, which is scheduled four out of six days and meets for 40 minutes for students in grades 6, 7, and 8, is built into the regular daily schedule. Each trimester students sign up for new activities, which may include Choir, Wind Ensemble, Strings Ensemble, Art, Woodshop, Newspaper, Sports Club, Drama, Chess/ Games Club, and others. During this activity block, Middle Schoolers enjoy the opportunity to become involved with different groups of youngsters (activities cross grade level designations), to learn more about particular activities, and to make the most of a variety of experiences with friends who share similar interests.

Intensive Learning

Intensive learning is a unique educational experience for Middle Schoolers and their teachers. During the week of Intensive Learning, academic schedules and routines are changed; instead of a normal week of 40 minute class periods, students and faculty embark on a week-long learning project that involves intensive learning in a specific subject area. Often traveling off campus, students spend the week with their entire class and teachers, with energies focused on their class project. This year fifth grade students will study the whaling industry and nineteenth century life in America and will participate in a three day trip to Mystic, Connecticut. The topic for sixth grade students has been "Zoo Design". Students have studied blueprints of different zoos, have visited the Cape May Zoo and the Philadelphia Zoo, and have made their own zoo models. Seventh graders have traditionally created scenery, worked on stage lighting, and learned their lines for a musical presentation, which has always been a big hit with students, parents, and faculty. Finally, the grade 8 project is environmental education and service, which includes three days and two nights of camping near the Delaware Water Gap.

Students are encouraged to immerse themselves in this exciting Intensive Learning experience. They have the opportunity to learn, to listen, to see, to ask questions, and to explore areas that they would not normally encounter during the regular school routine. Above all, Intensive Learning is an opportunity for Middle School boys and girls to gain knowledge about a specific topic and to learn more about themselves as they work together as a class.