

Middle School

2026-2027 CURRICULUM GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Overview

The Middle School program addresses the specific needs of early adolescents and is a transitional period between the child-centered approach of the Lower School and the college preparatory, curriculum-based emphasis of the Upper School. The Middle School at Nightingale is structured to allow for programming, curricula, and assemblies that meet the developmental needs of students across Classes V–VIII. Students are helped to grow and develop academically, as well as morally, emotionally, and socially. It is our goal to encourage each student to sample many kinds of activities, to learn where their real strengths and interests lie, and to grow in competence, confidence, and initiative.

The Middle School provides a strong academic program in which study skills, strategies, and leadership competencies complement the classroom content. Small, structured classes encourage a lively exchange of ideas and the exhilaration of being part of an exciting academic enterprise. The curriculum focuses as much on how to learn as on subject mastery. During these years, it is important for students to consolidate their skills; therefore, students are taught how to listen, follow directions, organize materials, keep track of homework assignments, manage their time, take notes, develop individualized study skills, defend an argument, communicate through writing and speech, and produce independent research projects. Students use a broad range of technological resources to support their learning and creativity in the classroom.

During a period called Enrichment, daily "labs" are available for students who need or want extra help with their work or who wish to explore a particular academic subject in greater depth. In addition to encouraging students to ask for help, this period allows students to find balance through study halls and the opportunity to enjoy supervised time on the rooftop playground and in the gymnasium, library, art and music rooms, and Maker Space.

Central to the Middle School, the advisory program ensures that every student in the division is known and supported. Students meet at least twice per schedule cycle with their advisor in either a small group or one-on-one setting. As the primary liaisons between the student and teachers, the advisor and dean, in conjunction with the Middle School administration and student's family, support and advocate for each student, facilitating the total development of her intellectual and social-emotional growth within a supportive community. The advisory program fosters a culture of open communication through informal discussions about relevant school-specific and current events topics, as well as through a more formal social-emotional curriculum. Through the curricular component of the advisory program, each student learns how to advocate for herself and others, deepen her awareness of herself and others, understand the power of words, and acquire language necessary to support social justice and maintain an inclusive community.

Academics are complemented by a rich array of offerings in art, drama, and music, with a focus on creativity and self expression. The athletics program, which includes physical education and competitive team sports, promotes physical fitness, skill development, teamwork, and going beyond barriers. Student-led clubs and faculty-run challenge courses are an outlet for individual interests and talents. Trips complement and augment the curriculum through offering immersive learning and leadership opportunities that amplify the student voice.

ENGLISH

Fostering a love of reading and building confidence in writing are key goals of the English program. Students read and discuss canonical and contemporary literature in a range of genres: novels, short stories, memoirs, essays, plays, and poems. They learn to read closely and to substantiate their analysis with details from the text. Literature is situated in its historical context and compared to other art forms. In addition to discussing literature, class time is devoted to writing instruction, with an emphasis on clear sentences, vivid expression, and the logical development of ideas. Students write about a range of topics in a variety of modes; creative writing is an integral part of the program.

CLASS V

In English V, students will read novels, short stories, and poems inspired by characters' personal journeys. Together we discuss essential questions like: *How should we approach our changing world with empathy and understanding? Why is it important to step out of our comfort zone in order to grow?* Each unit culminates with an analytical paragraph in which students are guided through the process using an outline to organize thoughts and ideas before drafting. Students will learn how to write a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence independently. We also offer many creative writing opportunities. This past year, students explored the story behind their name by writing about their name's origin and creating original name plates in our Maker Space. Course texts may include: *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan, *Dust of Eden* by Mariko Nagai, *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds, *Morning Girl* by Michael Dorris, *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park, and short story and poetry units.

CLASS VI

In Class VI English, students discover more about themselves and their world through active reading, analytical writing, and class discussion. Together, we tackle essential questions like: *What defines humanity? In what ways am I free? In what ways am I held back from being my fullest self?* We begin our class by

reading *A Place at the Table* by Saadia Faruqi and Laura Shovan, where students will discover the challenges and joys of cross-cultural friendship. This unit focuses on paragraph writing and evidence-gathering and ends in a Pakistani food festival, where students get a chance to sample some of the dishes described in the book. Next, students discover the importance of speaking truth to power while reading Julia Alvarez's *Before We Were Free*. In the spring, we begin our study of dystopian fiction with Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, and use this to launch us into conversations about freedom of thought, the importance of memory, and how a utopia can quickly dissolve into a dystopia. The year ends with a short science-fiction writing project.

CLASS VII

In English VII, students explore the complexities of identity and the challenges of coming of age by studying literature that encourages the transition from more concrete thinking about a text to deep analysis. Students read *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a selection of short stories and poems. Through discussions, essays, and creative writing and projects, students unpack the nuances and larger themes of the literature, examining how characters evolve and what these changes reveal about society and their place in it. Students hone critical thinking and writing skills while fostering an understanding of personal and collective identity in a complex and rapidly changing world.

CLASS VIII

English VIII is a yearlong course designed to prepare students for Upper School. Students read texts across several genres (the novel, memoir, graphic narratives, and drama) as they explore the following essential questions: *How much of who we become is within our own control? How and to what extent do forces outside our control–including gender, race, class, language, neighborhood, school system, and family structure, as well as broader historical and political forces–shape who we become?* Course texts may include *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo, *This Boy's Life* by Tobias Wolff, *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah, *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, and *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. Students craft shorter memoir and literary analysis pieces in the fall as they prepare for a full writing workshop later in the year. They also work on creative projects and engage in an acting workshop that leads to a memorized scene performance.

HISTORY

The Middle School history program builds upon the factual and conceptual foundations developed in the Lower School. The development of key skills is an ongoing priority; these include note-taking, creating and defending an argument, paragraph and essay writing, listening deeply and speaking confidently, and the research process. Geography is an integral part of the study of the political, social, and economic history of a specific region. This interdisciplinary program includes art, literature, and films, in addition to collaboration with the art, English, and modern language departments, among others.

CLASS V

Ancient Civilizations

What is ancient history? How can we know what happened in the ancient past, and why do we want to know? What is civilization? What factors determine where and how early civilizations developed? What elements of early civilization can we observe around us today? Class V history students address these questions and others as they investigate early humans and multiple ancient civilizations, including Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, ending the year in ancient Greece. They study prehistoric hunter gatherers, the Agricultural Revolution, and early river valley civilizations.

Class V historians learn to interpret maps and globes, and to identify and apply the major themes of geography (location, place, region, movement and human-environment interaction). As historians, students use primary and secondary sources to compose a meaningful narrative of our ancient past, to ask complex questions about that past, and to identify and describe past-present connections. Even as they collaborate to construct coherent narratives of the past (and to locate their own identities in time and place), Class V history students are invited to challenge existing dominant narratives, particularly where the voices of those at the intersection of race and gender have been historically marginalized.

Students develop the skills of thinking and writing historically through close reading of nonfiction texts, scrutinizing primary sources and examining artifacts. As a specialized skill-set, writing historically requires that students learn to take organized notes, to paraphrase and summarize effectively, and to apply new vocabulary accurately. From there, students develop arguments within structured paragraphs and short essays; they have multiple opportunities to practice this genre of writing throughout the year.

CLASS VI

World Cultures and Geography

Expanding upon their prior knowledge of ancient history, Class VI history students build critical thinking competencies as they study imperial development in Medieval Africa, Europe and Asia through the lens of human and physical geography. Students interrogate the concept of empire and the centrality of religion and trade in the spread of empire across multiple world regions from about 500 CE to 1500 CE.

Students apply the themes and tools of geography with increasing expertise. And as they advance their geo-literacy skills, Class VI history students are asked to recognize and document the ways in which geography and culture shape each other over time. Some of the topics to be studied include: Ancient Rome and the rise and spread of Christianity; the Silk Road; Islamic Empire and Medieval Europe; Kingdoms of West Africa; and Feudal Japan. Students trace the origins and propagation of world religions and examine the religious diaspora that emerged over time.

Thinking historically and writing historically are competencies that reflect skillful use of primary sources to gather, interpret, corroborate, evaluate and synthesize information. Class VI history students engage in the practices of close reading, research proficiency, strategic note-taking and building specialized vocabulary. Students interact with a wide variety of sources (text, artifacts, multimedia, trips, projects, etc), representing diverse perspectives. They gain analytical writing experience by composing essays of increasing length and sophistication, and produce independent projects that reflect complex historical knowledge.

As historians, Class VI students are emboldened to challenge existing dominant narratives, and to consistently seek out and center historically marginalized voices. They are expected to formulate meaningful questions, to identify and appreciate contradictions; and to confront the complexities of our shared human past, all within a given geographic and historical context.

CLASS VII

Democracy, Civics, and Advocacy: U.S. History and Government to 1800

Class VII History focuses on the development of democratic institutions within the context of settler colonialism and the beginning of the United States Republic in the 17th and 18th centuries in North America. Building on the themes of Class VI, students consider the role of geography in human environment interactions among indigenous groups and the motives for migration, both voluntary and forced, to North America from the "Old World." While acknowledging the limitations of democracy as it emerged in US history, we also focus on the ideals articulated in the founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, examining these within the historical context in which they were created and also as statements of principles that continue to deeply impact our lives. Throughout the course, students reflect on the meaning of civic participation and the mechanisms for change within our system and engage with concepts of inclusion, exclusion, power, and agency in history. They refine their close reading skills, including extensive primary source analysis and source corroboration and begin to develop historians' tools for constructing and assessing interpretations of the past. Analytical writing, research, note-taking, and public-speaking skills are also emphasized throughout the year.

CLASS VIII

How are America's Founding Ideals Revealed in Historical Memory and Human Rights?

Class VIII American History is centered around two essential questions: To what extent has the United States fulfilled its promise of liberty, justice, and equality for all? What does it mean to memorialize, and what function do memorials serve for us as a nation? Anchored by the text assigned for summer reading, Just Mercy: A True Story of the Fight for Justice (Adapted for Young Adults) by Bryan Stevenson, our course begins with an examination of contemporary concepts of race, racism, and anti-racism in America, with particular attention to systems like voting rights/voter suppression and mass incarceration.

Through the application of historical thinking and writing skills (sourcing, corroborating, contextualizing), students work with evidence to formulate an account of the Reconstruction Era, which many scholars astutely refer to as America's "Second Founding." Our studies then take us chronologically and thematically through the Gilded Age and Progressive Era; Native American displacement and resistance; immigration; and industrialization and its repercussions. Students consider the extent to which New Deal policies and programs were truly inclusive. They apply research processes and critical thinking to study of the Holocaust and Japanese internment as they survey WWII, and then they proceed to the modern Civil Rights Movement (including lessons on the Black Power and Black Arts Movements). The Class VIII trip to Alabama takes students to Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma, where they interact with historic Civil Rights landmarks, discover women's central role in the movement, and use archives to do the work of historians. We explore two powerful new additions to the landscape: the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the affiliated Legacy Museum. Upon our return, students consider what factors determine an effective rights movement by analyzing campaigns inspired by the Civil Rights Movement: women's rights, disability rights, gay and transgender rights, native rights and farmworkers' rights. Finally, the course culminates in a major project in which students create structured (competitive) proposals for original memorials dedicated to self-selected, under-recognized individuals and organizations. This capstone merges scholarly research, analytical writing, creative design and presentation elements and brings together the entire Middle School to appreciate the exemplary proposals.

MATHEMATICS

At the Nightingale, we believe math should be seen as beautiful and complex. We value reasoning skills, complex conceptual and abstract thinking, decision-making, and curiosity as essential components of mathematical learning. We strive to create an inclusive learning environment that supports students with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles where our differences are opportunities for learning and growth. We believe in the importance of empowering our students to openly engage in productive struggle and actively strive for our students to be the problem finders and problem solvers of the next century.

Our Middle School Mathematics courses foster habits of mind that support long-term academic growth. Students are encouraged to approach challenges with persistence, think critically, reflect on how they learn best, and use technology purposefully. Emphasis is placed on developing independence – knowing when they've learned something, how to study effectively, and how to approach learning with calmness and joy. By the end of the year, students are not only mathematically prepared for more advanced coursework, but also equipped with the mindset and strategies of thoughtful, resilient learners.

Learning takes place through productive struggle, which we call rigor, where students are taught to adapt, evolve, and extend their level of understanding as they engage with progressively more complex and creative approaches to problem solving.

CLASS V

Students begin the year by applying their knowledge of whole number arithmetic to new concepts including order of operations and evaluating exponential expressions. They are introduced to number theory, including divisibility rules, factors, and multiples. An exploration of fractions leads to addition and subtraction of fractions, mixed numbers, and decimals. Students learn multiplication and division of fractions through context-based explorations. A deep study of ratios and proportions leads students to a conceptual understanding of percent. Students are introduced to operations with integers and the coordinate plane. They investigate unit conversions and two-dimensional geometric concepts, including angle relationships. A focus on estimation and mental math as a means to improve number sense is reinforced throughout the year.

CLASS VI

Math VI provides students with a strong foundation in mathematical reasoning, problem-solving, and conceptual understanding. The curriculum deepens students' understanding of key topics such as area and surface area, ratios and unit rates, decimal arithmetic, rational numbers, expressions and equations, and data analysis. Many of these concepts build on earlier exposure, allowing students to extend their skills and apply them in more complex ways. Through multiple representations—visual models, graphs, tables, and symbolic expressions—students engage in both real-world applications and abstract thinking. As they move from arithmetic toward algebra, they learn to generalize patterns, work flexibly with numbers, and articulate their reasoning with clarity and precision.

Students solidify the skills of arithmetic and integer operations and prepare for the more abstract thinking required by subsequent courses. Teachers combine the traditional presentation of pre-algebra concepts and principles with innovative class activities, problem solving techniques, and online technological support. Students explore solving one-step and two-step equations and inequalities and how to graphically represent the solutions. They review decimals, fractions, and rational number theory and interact with irrational numbers and square roots for the first time. Students use this in work with ratios, proportions, and percent. Measurement, the Pythagorean Theorem, and two- and three-dimensional geometry, including surface area and volume, help students develop their spatial reasoning and awareness. Students also practice graphical representation of data and investigate fundamentals of probability.

**Advanced topics may include in-depth exploration of writing and solving multi-step equations and inequalities and practical applications of algebraic and percentage concepts.*

CLASS VII

In this pre-algebra class, students transition to a more abstract approach to mathematics. An essential component to Math VII is the application of all pre-algebra skills to real-life problems. Students solidify their skills in solving multi-step equations and inequalities. They delve into a formal discussion of properties of exponents and an in-depth investigation of ratios, proportions, and percent. Algebraic manipulation and graphical representation of linear functions reinforces the shift into abstract thinking. To reinforce the application of the Pythagorean Theorem, students work with radicals and irrational numbers. Students explore three-dimensional geometry, and a crucial component to this year's study is the derivation, application, and analysis of formulas for composite figures. A more detailed investigation of probability and statistics closes out the year.

**Advanced topics may include negative exponents, operations with radicals, distance and midpoint formulas, special right triangles, and an introduction to rational expressions.*

CLASS VIII

Algebra I

Algebra 1 builds on prior mathematical knowledge while preparing students for the abstract thinking of high school math. The curriculum extends students' understanding of linear and quadratic functions, systems of equations and inequalities, rational numbers, and data modeling. Many concepts, such as volume, functions, and expressions are familiar, but now explored through more sophisticated problems and representations. Students work across equations, graphs, tables, and verbal models to analyze patterns, solve problems, and model real-world scenarios. Emphasis is placed on reasoning through complexity, comparing mathematical structures, and clearly communicating one's thinking.

In this formal study of algebra, students explore solving and graphing linear and absolute value equations and inequalities, including systems of linear equations and inequalities. Students are introduced to function notation and begin to conceptualize functions' properties on the coordinate plane. An extensive study of quadratic expressions, equations, and graphs is essential to the year's study. Throughout the course, students learn to use these skills to solve real-world problems. Students devote time and attention to building their proficiency in factoring polynomials. They develop their abstract understanding of extraneous and non-real solutions through a deep study of rational and radical expressions and equations.
*Advanced topics may include solving exponential equations, completing the square, and right triangle trigonometry.

SCIENCE

Middle School science courses stress the development of laboratory skills, problem-solving, and an understanding and application of the scientific method.

CLASS V

The Science of Me

In this course, students learn about themselves as organisms made of matter and energy by studying the body as a system with parts that work together. Emphasis is placed on the development and application of the scientific skills of inquiry, observation, measurement, and recording data. Students apply their knowledge and build skills through the practice of formal laboratory procedures and the use of various laboratory equipment. The goal of this course is to lay the groundwork for students' future study of interdisciplinary science in Class VI.

CLASS VI

Nightingale and Bamford: Special Agents Unit (SAU)

The Class VI curriculum builds on the skills and concepts of The Science of Me course in Class V. Students explore topics across all disciplines of science through the lens of forensic investigation, including fingerprint and hair analyses and examination of chemical and genetic evidence. Each unit strengthens scientific skills by providing opportunities for systematic observations, the use of tools (such as the microscope), evidence collection, evidence analysis, and the communication of conclusions. The goals of this course are to encourage students to take risks in their learning and to embrace uncertainty. After all, not all cases are closed!

CLASS VII

Sustainable World

In Class VII science, through project-based learning and experimental design, students turn their focus outward to explore the environment around them. They develop skills that will allow them to build and live in a sustainable community. These scientific skills, which are needed to tackle real-world problems, are taught through collaborative work and experiential learning. Students have the opportunity to analyze authentic data, and in the process, explore the interaction between earth's hydrosphere, atmosphere, and geosphere with a focus on the three lenses of sustainability.

CLASS VIII

Sustainable World Part II

This course is a continuation of the study of scientific phenomena through the three lenses of sustainability. Students further develop analytical thinking, future thinking, and problem-solving skills while investigating real world problems. With a focus on climate change, energy resources, and our planet's oceans, students analyze scientific data to imagine possible solutions while opening their minds to diverse opinions and ideas. Throughout this course, students refine their laboratory, mathematical, collaboration, and communication skills.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Whether in French, Spanish, or Chinese, students in Classes V-VIII develop a foundation in the modern language of their choice over their years in the Middle School. Conducted primarily in the target language, language classes rapidly introduce a broad range of grammar and vocabulary, while emphasizing communicative and intercultural skills. Students in French and Spanish progress through multiple verb tenses each year, while students in Chinese learn how to read and write several hundred new characters in each level. Beginning classes are offered for students coming into the Middle School without a prior foreign language background, while those students coming from Nightingale's Lower School Spanish program, as well as those who have studied French or Chinese previously, are placed in appropriate classes for their level.

FRENCH/SPANISH

CLASS V

French and Spanish courses are taught almost exclusively in the target language. Students learn to spell and ask for and follow directions from the teacher in the language of instruction. The goal for each student is a high degree of active proficiency in the areas of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. This is acquired over several years of sustained study. Culture, art, and history are contextualized in the lessons so that students acquire not only the more practical notions of language but also a broader understanding of the usefulness of French and Spanish in a global society. Students learn the intricacies of number, gender, and case, and learn to describe people and things, discuss their school subjects and daily lives, and locate French and Spanish-speaking countries on a map. Students also develop their ability to express courtesies, count and tell time, talk about food, identify objects related to the home, and use basic verb paradigms to express actions.

CLASS VI

With a continued emphasis on oral and written communication, Middle School Intermediate students acquire more regular and irregular verbs and use them to narrate in the present, near future, recent past, preterite, and simple future tenses. Direct and indirect object pronouns are introduced in order to allow the student to acquire language that imitates normal usage by native speakers. More in-depth thematic vocabulary is introduced as it relates to travel, sports, clothing, personal hygiene, health, leisure activities, and finance. Students also discuss the differences between American schools and those in foreign countries in which French and Spanish are spoken.

CLASS VII

Students at this level learn to distinguish between the use of the imperfect versus the preterite, as well as the present perfect tense. Through translation exercises and compositions, students learn that there are many ways to express ideas from one language to the next. As with previous coursework, they are required to use verbal and written exchanges to solicit personal information, give and follow directions, and use command forms with a high degree of accuracy. The thematic vocabulary studied covers personal correspondence, organizing festivities, media, using the telephone, and style and design. More in-depth readings on a variety of topics from celebrities, science, and art are included.

CLASS VIII

This course begins with a thorough review of all previous material, as repetition and practice are necessary at this stage in second language acquisition. Statements with "if" clauses, relative pronouns, and the subjunctive are introduced and occupy a significant amount of instructional time in the second semester. Thematic vocabulary covered includes national lifestyles, national holidays, specific items related to national history, French and Spanish colonies, agriculture, and professions.

MANDARIN CHINESE

CLASS V / CLASS VI

The early years of Mandarin study concentrate on the fundamentals of reading, writing, and speaking. Students learn to read and write several hundred of the most commonly written Chinese characters. As with any beginning language course, the focus is on practical skills and vocabulary relevant to the daily lives of students. This course requires a considerable amount of memorization, especially given the use of characters in writing.

CLASS VII

In Class VII Chinese, students review the vocabulary and syntax covered in earlier years of study while increasing their repertoire of Chinese characters. Authentic texts are incorporated in the instruction to allow students to contextualize their use of specific thematic vocabulary. While this course is primarily for students in Class VII, it may be repeated for a second year if a student requires more time to consolidate her familiarity with the material.

CLASS VIII

This course begins with a review of vocabulary and grammatical structures from earlier years of study. Students then move on to new themes to deepen their communicative and reading skills. New topics include giving directions, national holidays, vacation, classical stories, China's geography and demographics, manners, and etiquette. As students advance in their oral language capabilities, they broaden their ability to describe their academic and home lives, as well as make comparisons to their peers in China. During the second half of this one-year course, the focus turns to more advanced grammar and conjunctions, enabling students to produce increasingly sophisticated written work. Ultimately, students are expected to be capable of writing short narratives, stories, and dialogues of 300 words or more.

CLASSICS

All students in Classes VI–VIII study Latin, the foundation of all Romance languages. By the end of Class VIII, students will have acquired a large amount of vocabulary and will have gained a firm grounding in the basic morphological and syntactical structures in preparation for reading authentic Latin texts in Class IX. In addition, there are separate entry-tracks in both Class VII and Class VIII for students new to Nightingale without prior knowledge of Latin.

CLASS VI

After a brief introduction to the history and development of the Latin language, Latin pronunciation, and some basic vocabulary and useful expressions, students begins to use the textbook series Ecce Romani as the foundation of their Latin study. Through the reading method, the series introduces the workings of a highly-structured, inflected language, with increasing emphasis on vocabulary building and the study of derivatives in English and the Romance languages. The class also addresses cultural topics such as slavery and Roman dress and explores the mythical beginnings of Rome from the Trojan Wars to its founding.

CLASS VII

The seventh grade course begins with a review of the previous year's work and subsequently introduces the complete active verbal system and all noun and adjective declensions. Important elements of Roman culture and daily life, such as Roman administration and aqueducts, are also addressed, while historical material covered ranges from the period of the Roman kings up to the time of the Punic Wars.

CLASS VIII

The course begins with a review of the previous year's work and subsequently covers more advanced grammatical concepts, such as the passive voice, infinitives, participles, and the subjunctive mood. Important elements of Roman culture and daily life, such as Roman education and cuisine, are studied along with a historical survey of the era from the late Republic to the Age of Augustus.

LEARNING RESOURCES

The Learning Resources Department appreciates the diversity of learning styles in Middle School and is dedicated to meeting each child's learning needs. Beginning in Class V, learning specialists teach all students how to meet the expectations of an increasingly demanding curriculum. Throughout the Middle School experience, they support the students' academic growth— both in small groups and individually—as they mature into proficient self-advocates who are resilient, meta-cognitive, and strategic learners. As needed, learning specialists work closely with students, deans, and classroom teachers as well as parents and outside services.

CLASS V

All Class V students take a year-long course that emphasizes specific tools and strategies to help them develop executive functioning skills, as well as an understanding of how to learn and study with success. Beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, Class V students also have an opportunity to deepen both their Literacy and Math skills through differentiated small group instruction that allows for remediation, additional support, extension, and added challenge where needed.

CLASS VI - CLASS VIII

In small groups, students with a Latin exemption learn strategies for study skill strategies that promote organization, time management, reading comprehension,

note-taking, writing, memorization, and test preparation. Students learn how to apply these skills to their homework, in-class writing assignments, and tests, and special attention is given to the personal needs of each student. Opportunities for individualized instruction allow for reinforcement of content material and setting of academic goals. The objective is to teach strategies that promote self-awareness, self-advocacy, and successful learning. Skills classes are taught by the learning specialists, who also serve as coordinators and liaisons with teachers, parents, and outside support services.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

The Middle School computer science curriculum cultivates computational thinking, problem-solving skills, and digital literacy. Students build their programming, robotics, design, and foundational technology skills. The program integrates hands-on projects that explore physical computing and game design, encouraging creativity and technical proficiency. By the end of Middle School, students are well-prepared for advanced computer science studies, equipped with a solid understanding of programming concepts and how they can be responsible digital citizens.

CLASS V

Students begin by developing the basic set of technology skills necessary to be successful in Middle School. Emphasis is also placed on digital citizenship, with lessons on online communication and building a positive digital footprint. Throughout the course, students learn about programming using block based coding applications, examine the basics of engineering and robotics, and develop image- and video-editing skills.

CLASS VI

Students continue developing their programming skills using block-coding platforms and microcontrollers. Students learn about circuitry and its relationship to physical computing. Students also explore elements of game design and program interactive games. Digital citizenship instruction includes a focus on digital footprint and social media.

CLASS VII

Students continue building their programming skills through an introduction to text-based coding and robotics. Students conduct an in-depth study of 3D design, exploring the design thinking process as they learn how to use 3D modeling applications. Digital citizenship instruction focuses on social media, data mining, and cyberbullying.

CLASS VIII

Introduction to Programming

In this course, students are introduced to universal programming concepts and strategies. Students explore the Python coding language, p5js, and physical computing. At all stages in the course, students engage in debugging and computational exercises designed to prepare them for more advanced programming experiences.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Middle School health education supports students as they navigate early adolescence. Students focus on learning about and caring for their physical, mental, and social well-being. To best support students through the Middle School years and ultimately prepare them for Upper School, developing healthy communication and decision-making skills are at the forefront of the classroom experience. In addition to health education in the classroom, students in Classes VI and VIII take a personal safety course during which they practice verbal and physical self-defense skills.

CLASS V

Class V students participate in a semester-long health course that establishes the foundation for health and wellness education in Middle School. With a focus on decision-making, communication, and self-care, students explore identity, relationships, and issues facing preadolescents. A safe and inclusive classroom environment is established where students prepare to navigate the transition from childhood to early adolescence.

CLASS VI

Building on the skills introduced in the Class V curriculum, students in Class VI delve further into issues of early adolescence. Decision-making, communication, and media literacy skills are practiced. Topics addressed include human development, nutrition, relationships, social media use, and substance use prevention. Students take a personal safety course where they focus on establishing body boundaries, street safety, and handling challenges in peer relationships.

CLASS VII

Class VII students participate in a semester-long health course where they focus on decision-making, healthy stress management, media literacy, and values clarification. Students practice these skills through real-life health scenarios to feel prepared for handling challenges of early adolescence. Topics addressed in Class VII health include healthy communication, gender and sexuality, sleep hygiene, and substance use prevention.

CLASS VIII

Students in Class VIII take part in a semester-long health course. Students look at relevant health topics through the lens of decision-making, communication, and building/maintaining healthy relationships. With the goal of taking increased responsibility for their personal health in preparation for their Upper School experience, students explore adolescent health issues and begin to individually define what health is at this stage in their lives. Students take a personal safety course that focuses on setting boundaries in early dating/romantic relationships, threat assessment and street safety, and practicing verbal and physical self-defense skills.

VISUAL ART

The Middle School offers a wide variety of art courses, including 2D and 3D Art, Photography, Ceramics, Painting, Digital Imaging, Printmaking, and "Art Beyond the Museum, Everywhere and for Everyone." In Class V, the school year is divided into quarters as students rotate through four different art courses. In Classes VI, VII, and VIII, students rotate through two different semester-long art courses. In each course, students learn new technical processes while working with a wide range of materials. Their assignments are designed to increase observational skills, encourage innovative thinking, recognize intuition, and develop a sense of what is visually thought-provoking. In addition to the art-making process, students study works of art in the classroom and at various nearby museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Jewish Museum.

CLASS V

Ceramics, Photography, 2D Art, Printmaking

In Ceramics, students focus on hand-building techniques. As they gain technical skills, they also explore aspects of the creative process, including idea development, problem solving, and self-expression.

In the Photography course, students acquire skills in the darkroom and learn the rudiments of this art through experimentation with pinhole cameras, photosensitive materials such as film and paper, and compositions with light.

In the 2D Art course, students explore the fundamentals of painting and drawing. Students learn about perspective drawing by creating a 2-point perspective cityscape and will approach painting with inspiration from surrealism.

In Printmaking, students learn a range of printmaking methods and techniques for creating visual work through these methods. The course explores the mixing of print media and how they interact with other media. Students will focus on collage, drawing, painting, and bookmaking while exploring their personal styles through the wide range of assigned projects.

CLASS VI

Design Principles and Techniques in 2D and 3D, Photography

In Design Principles, students apply the principles and elements of design in both two and three-dimensional materials. Line, color, shape, value, texture, form, and space are explored in drawing, painting, and sculpture. New techniques and materials are introduced throughout the semester.

In Photography, students begin using 35mm film cameras, working in black and white. Concentrating on framing and composition, they learn to process their own film and master basic printing techniques.

CLASS VII

Ceramics, Drawing and Mixed Media

In Ceramics, students focus on ceramic processes, methods, and materials. They have the opportunity to continue to build upon both hand-building skills and techniques, as well as utilizing the potter's wheel to create their work.

In Mixed Media, students learn the technical skills to bring realism to their artwork. Working from a grid to create an enlargement and using charcoal to render value, students gain confidence in their ability to render the world around them. For our final project we focus on identity and creating a visual narrative on the canvas using mixed media. Students have the opportunity to display their work and engage in classroom critiques.

CLASS VIII

Drawing and Painting, Digital Imagery

Class VIII Drawing and Painting focuses on the production of 2D work and the development of skills of mark-making, tone, and visual representation. Mentor pieces are used as guides and inspiration for deep exploration, analysis, and reflection.

The Class VIII Digital Imagery course introduces strategies and basic skills for visual and audio production. Students produce several videos varying in length from 30 seconds to three minutes, taking each project from pre-production to editing. Although the primary emphasis is on production, students will also view and analyze selected videos from various sources, while learning and applying the essential tools of media and news literacy.

PERFORMING ARTS

Nightingale recognizes the value of exploring personal creativity through artistic expression. Through Dance, Drama, and Music, students learn the power of using their whole self – body, mind, and spirit – to represent the human experience. In doing so, our artists make connections with each other, their learning in other classes, and with the greater world.

DRAMA

The drama classes in Middle School foster personality growth and facilitate learning. Students explore drama as an art form and use it as an approach to learning in other areas. Drama class provides a safe environment for students to engage their imagination in a theatrical environment. Students learn the meaning of working together in a group and the love of performing with others. It enables them to see the world from different perspectives. By performing plays, it helps students to understand people, places, periods of history, and issues that might be unfamiliar to them. Being in a show is more than just memorizing lines — it helps students to identify and amplify what's important in a story and to connect with others around them.

CLASS V

Students in Class V take a trimester of drama and start to learn to work together as a group by performing a small play for their parents and the Middle School.

CLASS VI
Students in Class VI take a semester of drama in which they begin to work on different scenes, plays, and dive deeper into character study. A full scale musical is presented in the fall in collaboration with students from Allen-Stevenson

CLASS VII
Class VII students may choose to perform in a dramatic production presented each spring with students from the Allen-Stevenson School. As an introduction to the Upper School, Class VII and VIII students may participate in our Upper School spring musical.

CLASS VIII
Class VIII students are invited to participate in the Upper School play in the fall. As an introduction to the Upper School, Class VII and VIII students may participate in our Upper School spring musical.

MUSIC
Middle School students personalize their study of music by choosing to follow an academic music "track." Through this system, each student can specialize in a musical instrument or skill while continuing to study the core curriculum and music literacy concepts that are essential to a robust and well-rounded music education. The three tracks available to Middle School musicians are Music Composition, Guitar, and Strings, which are discussed in greater detail below. Because the curriculum is designed with a four-year approach, students continue in their designated track throughout Middle School. When special circumstances arise, students may consult with the Director of Performing Arts about transferring tracks.

MUSIC COMPOSITION
Composition students deepen their music composition, criticism, and theory skills by analyzing a wide array of music and creating their own. Students collaborate on a variety of original compositions throughout the year, with a particular focus on opera (Class V), popular songs (Class VI), film music (Class VII), and musical theater (Class VIII). The Middle School experience culminates in a workshop production of the original Class VIII musical that features students from music composition, dance, strings, and theatre in a Performing Arts Capstone project.

GUITAR
Guitar students learn a flexible guitar technique that will prepare them to explore the many worlds of guitar music, from rock and pop to classical and jazz. They study basic chords, strumming and picking patterns, simple melodies, and reading guitar tablature. After acquiring the technical fundamentals, guitar students have the opportunity to choose much of the music studied in class and to play some of their favorite songs.

STRINGS
Strings students learn the fundamental techniques of playing violin, viola, or cello in a small group setting. They develop technical facility on their chosen instrument while playing a variety of engaging repertoire and experimenting with improvisation. Strings students learn the fundamentals of ensemble playing and have frequent opportunities to write and perform original instrumental compositions. Private individual instruction in voice, guitar, piano, violin, viola, and cello is available for an additional charge.

PERFORMING ENSEMBLES

CLASS V
In addition to following the Strings, Guitar, or Music Composition tracks, all students in Class V sing in the Class V Chorus, where they continue to hone singing and sight-reading skills in a dynamic choral setting that encourages vocal health, develops breath control, and builds ensemble skills. The Class V chorus performs in winter and spring concerts as well as at special assemblies and events throughout the school year.

CLASS VI - VIII
In addition to their chosen Music track, students in Classes VI–VIII may choose to participate in one of three optional performing ensembles, which allow them to develop their performing and ensemble skills in specialized mixed-grade groups. All ensembles meet within the school day during designated class periods. The performing ensembles available to students in Classes VI–VIII include Middle School Chorus, Middle School Drumming Ensemble, and Middle School Strings Ensemble.

DANCE
Dance for Classes VI-VIII offers a comprehensive study of choreographic composition alongside an exploration of various dance styles and techniques, aimed at enhancing creativity, critical thinking, and technical skill development. In Class VI, students begin by focusing on the foundational elements of choreography—space, time, dynamics, and relationships—through movement explorations, improvisation, and composition exercises. As they progress through Classes VII-VIII, students delve into a wide range of dance styles, including ballet, jazz, modern, contemporary, musical theatre and hip hop, refining their ability to make artistic choices and enhance their technical, performative, and interpretive skills. With an emphasis on collaboration and personal reflection, these courses encourage students to expand their movement vocabulary, gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of various dance styles, and apply these skills to their Capstone projects, ultimately fostering growth in both technique and artistic development.

CLASS V
Students study elements of contemporary dance, including jazz, modern, and ballet. Special attention is given to improvisation. Students create short dance studies that are shared in class.

CLASS VI
Students deep dive into the world of jazz dance and its many forms. Students engage in an aerobic warm up and across-the-floor work and learn essential jazz phrases and combinations. In addition, students begin to focus on the foundational elements of choreography—space, time, dynamics, and relationships—through movement explorations, improvisation, and composition exercises.

CLASS VII - VIII

Dance Track

All Class VII and VIII students follow either a dance or PE track to fulfill their physical education requirement. The dance track is for students who are interested in studying dance technique at a more advanced level and going beyond the fundamentals of composition to explore their own choreography. Dance students collaborate throughout the year to create their own class and group dances.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

All Middle School athletic teams provide students at Nightingale the opportunity to compete, learn skills, grow, and have fun. All teams in Classes V–VIII have a no-cut policy, allowing students to experience playing on a team for their school. Team sport choices mirror our Upper School athletic program and include Soccer, Volleyball, and Cross Country in the fall; Basketball, Winter Track, Squash (Class VII/VIII only), and Swimming in the winter; and Lacrosse, Softball, and Track and Field in the spring.

CLASSES V AND VI

Class V and VI students follow either a PE track or an athletic track to fulfill their physical education requirement. In the PE track, students are introduced to a variety of activities, including cooperative games, traditional team and individual sports, outdoor education, yoga, and resistance training. Students learn about components of fitness, cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility as a means to both educate and motivate the students to become active both inside and outside of the school.

Class V/VI Athletics is all about developing skills, learning what it means to be a student-athlete, and developing a love for athletics and team culture. Our V/VI teams develop skills in a fun and competitive environment, while learning how to compete with other schools in our league. Teams participate in up to four "Jamborees" per season, which are round-robin style competitions. During these Jamborees, students not only learn how to put their skills to the test in a competitive setting, but learn how to be great teammates – supporting their fellow Nighthawks on the sidelines as well as within gameplay.

CLASSES VII AND VIII

All Class VII and VIII students follow either a Dance, PE, or Athletic track to fulfill their Physical Education requirement. The PE track focuses on promoting physical literacy through varied activities. Team sports and games promote skill development, teamwork, and strategic analysis, while providing opportunities for leadership and creativity. Students participate in a variety of cooperative games and traditional sports. Other fitness activities may include yoga, High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), Zumba, and bouldering. Students also learn how to interpret and use fitness assessment data to set goals and develop lifelong fitness plans. Through this multifaceted program, students gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to become and remain physically active for a lifetime.

In Class VII/VIII Athletics, students use the skills they develop at the V/VI level and learn how to strategize towards winning as a team. When numbers allow, we form "A" and "B" teams to allow students to compete at their appropriate level. Class VII/VIII teams have a full competition schedule against schools in and out of our league and learn and embrace their unique roles on their teams to ultimately contribute to team success. Our VII/VIII Athletics program prepares students to compete at the Varsity level.

LIBRARY

The Middle School library program builds on the foundational skills developed in the Lower School. The program's dual objectives are to develop the skills necessary to navigate an increasingly complex, information-rich world and to foster a love of reading. The program aims to provide students with a strong foundation in information literacy competencies to support them on their academic journeys here at Nightingale and beyond the classroom.

In addition, librarians collaborate with faculty to provide all Middle School students with challenging and rewarding research experiences that teach them how to solve information queries successfully by developing the skills necessary to define a research question, identify keywords and search terms, and locate and evaluate print and digital resources. The library maintains a strong online presence to support student learning beyond designated class times. Curated research guides, or LibGuides, provide in-school and remote access to the online catalog as well as an extensive range of databases and digital resources.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement in the Middle School seeks to offer opportunities for students to identify and respond to the needs within their communities both near and far. Middle School service projects vary widely, from visiting with adults suffering from Alzheimer's Disease to fundraising for an organization chosen by students. The projects focus on meeting the intellectual and emotional development of our students. Elected representatives to the Community Engagement Board in each grade help to organize projects for their classmates. As in the Lower and Upper Schools, classroom teachers may incorporate service-learning projects into their curriculum.

TRIPS

Nightingale believes in the importance of outside-of-the-classroom learning experiences. Trips are offered at each grade level and are led by grade-level teachers, advisors, and class deans and supported by our Director of Global and Civic Engagement and our Director of Museum Education and Cultural Partnerships. All

classes take an overnight trip to build community within their class as well as day trips that accentuate what they are learning in the classroom. The Class VII and VIII trips are connected to the history curriculum. Traditionally, full-class trips include:

CLASS V

A series of trips throughout the year as part of their Journey Curriculum. They visit museums up and down Museum Mile (including the Jewish Museum, Cooper Hewitt, and El Museo del Barrio). At each museum, students contemplate journeys—physical, emotional, metaphorical, through lessons with our Visual Education Coordinator and staff from the museum.

CLASS VI

Throughout the year students take part in day trips integrated into the curriculum.

CLASS VII

Washington, DC (overnight): As part of learning about the systems of government, in history classes, students visit several important buildings and memorials for an immersive and interactive experience in our nation's capital.

CLASS VIII

Alabama (overnight): Traveling from Montgomery through Selma to Birmingham, students meet local civil rights activists who share their experiences at locations critical to the movement, culminating in a full day at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum.

EXTRACURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

The extracurricular program is primarily elective, allowing students to choose activities that interest them and to use their talents to the fullest extent in a variety of experiences. Participation in extracurricular activities allows students to build group spirit and expand their friendships.

Other Middle School extracurricular offerings include the following:

- Theater Productions, Classes VI-VIII (referenced above)
- Athletic teams, Classes V–VIII (referenced above)
- Out of Uniform (MS literary magazine)
- Student government: Middle School co-presidents and class representatives to the Arts Board, Community Engagement Board, Environmental Board, Inclusivity Board, and Athletic Board (Blue/Silver)
- Community service projects at each grade level
- Debate (tournament team and club)
- Sweet Readers, Class VI
- Performing Ensembles, Classes VI–VIII
- Middle School Clubs: Previous clubs offerings have included: Current Events Club, Knitting Club, Math Club, Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), Greco-Roman Club, Hip Hop Dance Club, Board Games Club, Drama Club, and DIY/Makers Club.

ENRICHMENT

Middle School students have a daily Enrichment period that gives them time to pursue independent projects in art, music, and technology; to seek extra help in their academic subjects; and more. Offerings include: Major Academic Subject Labs; Open Art (Ceramics, Painting, Photography, Video); Open Maker Space; Roof; Open Gym; Quiet and Group Study Halls, Library.

THINKERY

Middle School students have the option to participate in Thinkery on Mondays through Fridays from 3:20 until 6:00 p.m.Thinkery is a place for students to be after school to study, think, connect, and play.

Under the supervision of the Director of Thinkery and Thinkery staff, students attending Thinkery are given the time and space to finish their homework, study, and prepare for assessments and receive academic and organizational support as well as content-specific support from Upper School peer tutors and teachers. In addition to supporting students academically, Thinkery also offers opportunities for students to engage in creative play and enriching activities and to expand their horizons through its monthly lecture series called "Thinkery Lectures", which have ranged from neuroscience to distance hiking to the science of vaccines to music composition.

Students who participate in Nightingale sports or have other after-school activities may join Thinkery any time before 6:00 p.m.