



Middle School Program of Studies

2023 - 2024

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Overview

The Middle School Program of Studies provides course information and registration guidelines. These will assist students in selecting their middle school schedule for next year.

This Program of Studies handbook is designed for parents and students. This handbook describes the general content and units covered in each middle school subject taught at SSIS. It also provides additional information about other essential elements of our middle school program at SSIS. Please read it carefully and refer to it when completing the course selection forms. If you have any further questions about the middle school program of studies and cannot locate this information within the pages of this handbook, please contact the MS Administration or Counseling offices.







Mission Statement and Core Values

MISSION STATEMENT

Saigon South International School (SSIS) is a college preparatory school committed to the intellectual and personal development of each student in preparation for a purposeful life as a global citizen.

CORE VALUES

SSIS Believes In and Promotes:

	<p>Academic Excellence</p> <p>A challenging academic program, based on American standards, that teaches the student how to think, to learn, to problem solve, and to work individually and in teams while acquiring a foundational knowledge base of the world.</p>
	<p>Sense of Self</p> <p>A community atmosphere in which each student can gain a sense of who they are in the world; to develop self-confidence, strong character, convictions, leadership abilities, grace, courage, the desire to be a life-long learner, and the commitment to achieve excellence in all they do.</p>
	<p>Balance in Life</p> <p>An academic program that promotes an appreciation for all of life and seeks to balance the sciences with the humanities; academics with the arts; mental wholeness with physical, social, and spiritual wholeness; and future career with family relationships.</p>
	<p>Dedicated Service</p> <p>A view that looks beyond oneself to the assets and needs of the surrounding community and the world and finds fulfillment in unlocking potential in the service of mankind. The model SSIS graduate will demonstrate a caring attitude, be environmentally aware, and persevere for the good of the community.</p>
	<p>Respect for All</p> <p>A perspective that each individual is a person of worth.</p>

PROFILE OF A LEARNER

As a community of learners, we are:

- Collaborative:** We include others, work purposefully and respectfully to achieve a shared goal and recognize everyone's contributions.
- Creative:** We wonder; we seek and generate original ideas and outcomes.
- Critical Thinkers:** We ask questions and inquire of self and others; we evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information from multiple perspectives to make meaning before taking action.
- Communicators:** We listen actively; we express ideas with clarity and respect.
- Adaptive:** We respond to change with an open mind in order to learn and grow physically, mentally, socially and emotionally.
- Courageous:** We take action in challenging situations; we persevere when it is right to do so and recognize when it is right to change.
- Reflective:** We pause and evaluate our thinking, actions, and impact.
- Ethical:** We act with integrity; we respect the rights of all individuals and meet our responsibilities to the greater community.
- Knowledgeable:** We develop and use conceptual understandings, exploring knowledge across a wide range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance. (IB)



Program Requirements and Course Descriptions

Grade 6 Requirements

All Grade 6 students will be enrolled in the following courses. All courses are full-year courses unless otherwise noted:

Core classes:

1. English Language Arts
2. Exploratory Writing (semester)
3. Mathematics
4. Physical Education and Health
5. Science
6. Social Studies
7. Technology: Digital Literacy (semester)
8. World Language (Mandarin or Spanish), English as an Additional Language, or Learning Support

Note regarding World Language: The World language program is a language acquisition designed for non-heritage speakers. Students who have Mandarin or Spanish as their home language/heritage language are not eligible for that language and will have to select a different language.

Elective classes:

Elective from the following choices. Grade 6 students select 1 full-year course or 2 semester courses:

- Art 6 (semester)
- Beginning Band (year)
- Intermediate Band (year)
- Beginning Dance (semester)
- Drama 6 (semester)
- Future STEM Crafters 6 (semester)

Core Required Courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 6

The SSIS English Language Arts program places a strong emphasis on developing students' skill in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to help them become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. The workshop method, which prioritizes student choice and inquiry, provides opportunities to explore key elements of various narrative, informational, argumentative, and literary texts through reading and writing. The English Language Arts program's goal is to provide students with rigorous and meaningful learning activities that help them build the literacy skills necessary for college and career.

EXPLORATORY WRITING 6 (SEMESTER)

This is a semester class that emphasizes student development in writing across the curriculum for various purposes and audiences. The types of writing explored include argumentative writing and narrative writing. Students will use technology to write, collaborate and publish their works. Students in Grade 6 are required to take a semester of Exploratory Writing.

MATHEMATICS 6

Math 6 aims to enhance mathematical literacy by building on the foundations of computation and number sense learned in elementary school while applying them to a wide variety of situations to promote critical thinking and reasoning skills. Units of study include algebraic reasoning, operations involving decimals and fractions, rules of integers, ratios and proportions, data collection and representation, geometric relationships, measurement, probability, and an introduction to algebra. There is an emphasis in developing the ability to determine the reasonableness of answers. Students often do cross-curricular projects involving technology, humanities, and science. The class is differentiated to meet our students' learning needs.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH 6

The Physical Education Program in Grade 6 focuses on helping to develop physically literate students who respect and value their bodies and their health. We aim to provide all students with a nurturing environment in which they feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves to grow and develop both in their physical skills and learning relationships while having fun in the process.

Over the course of the year, students will be exposed to a variety of units that are structured for fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding the application of strategy and tactics of different sports and movement forms. Interpersonal skills such as sportsmanship, offering positive feedback, and demonstrating responsible behavior are woven into the nature of team games and activities. Units can include but are not limited to: invasion games, swimming, traditional Vietnamese dance, net & wall games, non-traditional games, striking & fielding, and fitness.

Through our health curriculum, students learn about a variety of topics related to their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. When put together, our program aims to empower students to have the confidence, ability, and motivation to be physically active and make healthy choices throughout their lives.

SCIENCE 6

The Grade 6 science program focuses on critical thinking and communication of scientific thinking. Students explore concepts through the process of scientific inquiry to explain the world in which we live. Students learn how to formulate a hypothesis, identify variables, describe procedures, and test conjectures of whether or not their data is conclusive. Students apply these scientific skills in "diversity of life" and learn what it means to be "alive." Following this, students explore the transformation of energy using the design cycle to develop the most efficient solar oven. Next, we will explore the cosmos by developing models and analyzing data, particularly the formation of solar systems, plus lunar phases and eclipses as part of the earth, moon, and sun system. Our final unit is evolution, where students construct explanations of Darwin's process of natural selection and learn about previous mass extinction events in earth's history.

SOCIAL STUDIES 6

The Grade 6 Social Studies curriculum covers world civilizations from prehistory to the 6th century. The course is a thematically based exploration of the big ideas represented in history and geography. Geography themes are introduced through personal histories and timelines. Students continue to explore these themes through the lens of the Ancient Civilizations of Egypt, Greece, and Rome with emphasis on the impact of geography on human settlement, social systems, and daily life. Throughout the year, students will improve their ability to critically analyze historical sources, utilize academic language in writing and speaking, compose argumentative essays, and think critically about the past, the present, and the future through a range of creative and academic projects. Students will improve their research and writing skills by developing argumentative essays, as well as improve technology skills through projects and presentations.

TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL LITERACY (SEMESTER)

In this course, students will explore technology. They will further develop their digital footprint while creating videos, animations, and graphics. They will also be introduced to programming tools that will allow them to create games and manipulate physical objects. As they move through each topic, they will record their journey through the creation of a personal electronic portfolio.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL A

Mandarin Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in the target language, as well as, learning aspects of Chinese culture. Pinyin, basic strokes, components of the characters, reading, writing, and typing skills will be taught at this level. Students will also explore Chinese idioms, stories, and songs. Please note: This class is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL A

Spanish Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in the target language, as well as learning aspects of Spanish culture. Students will also explore Spanish stories and songs. Basic vocabulary, grammar, and speaking with daily oral exercises will be introduced at this level. Please note: This class is not for native Spanish speakers.

Exploratory Electives

ART 6 (SEMESTER)

The Visual Art program is a semester course. Initially, students will develop an understanding of the Studio Habits and Growth mindset. Both of these will be incorporated in all learning throughout the semester. The Grade 6 Visual Arts curriculum is designed to help students to combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas and formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content. Students will be exposed to a variety of artistic media and techniques from drawing, painting, and ceramics, to digital art. They will demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design. Students will feel comfortable taking risks in order to create artwork that speaks to who they are. All art is showcased in an online gallery and displayed regularly throughout the school.

BEGINNING BAND (YEAR)

This is a year-long performance course offering students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who is interested in beginning to play a band instrument. The school has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for use by students. This course is not suitable for students wishing to play guitar or keyboard only. Music literary skills form an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

INTERMEDIATE BAND (YEAR)

Prerequisite: Beginning Band or 1+ years experience

This is a year-long performance course offering students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who currently plays a band or orchestral instrument and is aimed at players who have one or more years of experience on their instruments. The school has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for use by students. This course is not suitable for students wishing to play guitar or keyboard only. Music literary skills form an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs as well as more advanced playing techniques and expressive interpretation of music. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

BEGINNING DANCE (SEMESTER)

This semester-long dance elective is designed to promote an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. The course is designed for students with little to no dance experience. However, students of all dance abilities and grade levels are welcome. The elements included in this course will promote a solid dance technique and allow students to become familiar with jazz dance terminology as well as a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. As there is no set subscribed music, students will have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and is currently popular. The course will also cultivate an understanding of the modern jazz dance genre by developing the students' physical abilities to display dance movement in an expressive and artistic way. The use of space, an awareness of an audience, and a strong sense of performance are all building blocks of this course, culminating in a final practical examination at the Beginners level, that could be locally or internationally examined, depending on the readiness of the students.

DRAMA 6 (SEMESTER)

Students in Grade 6 will have a varied and exciting introduction to Drama. This will include an introduction to core Drama skills and the use of body and voice in theatre while also developing skills for collaboration and social interaction through classroom and small group activities. Initially, students will develop trust and an understanding of key Drama skills using theatre sports, games, and improvisation. They will learn to develop and play a role confidently and create scenes using text and improvisation. Students will then focus on theatre design and learn how to stage scenes creatively. They will later perform short plays using props and costumes. The focus of the course is very practical and students must come to class with a willingness to experiment and become part of a team. Students will be expected to take part in small and large group work, solo work, independent research, and creative writing either in the classroom or at home.

FUTURE STEM CRAFTERS 6 (SEMESTER)

Students will be introduced to a variety of STEM experiences through project-based learning. They will utilize the SSIS design cycle and participate in various activities while exploring their creativity. They will solve problems, generate ideas, create prototypes, and move through an iterative process. These activities may include coding, robotics, game making, design, and modeling, among other topics.

7th Grade Requirements

All Grade 7 students will be enrolled in the following courses. All courses are full-year courses unless otherwise noted:

Core classes:

1. English Language Arts
2. Exploratory Writing (semester)
3. Mathematics
4. Physical Education and Health
5. Science
6. Social Studies
7. Technology Course (semester)
8. World Language (Mandarin or Spanish), English as an Additional Language, or Learning Support

Note regarding World Language: The World language program is a language acquisition designed for non-heritage speakers. Students who have Mandarin or Spanish as their home language/heritage language are not eligible for that language and will have to select a different language.

Elective classes:

Elective from the following choices. Grade 7 students select 1 full-year course or 2 semester courses:

- Art 7 (year or semester)
- Beginning Band (year)
- Intermediate Band (year)
- Choir (year or semester)
- Creative Writing 7/8 (semester)
- Beginning Dance (year or semester) -
- Intermediate Dance (year or semester)
- Drama 7 (year or semester)
- Public Speaking 7/8 (semester)
- Yearbook (year)

Core Required Courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 7

The SSIS English Language Arts program places a strong emphasis on developing students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to help them become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. The workshop method, which prioritizes student choice and inquiry, provides opportunities to explore key elements of various narrative, informational, argumentative, and literary texts through reading and writing. The English Language Arts program's goal is to provide students with rigorous and meaningful learning activities that help them build the literacy skills necessary for college and career.

EXPLORATORY WRITING 7 (SEMESTER)

The SSIS writing program emphasizes student development in writing across the curriculum for various purposes and audiences. The types of writing explored include poetry, digital storytelling, and research writing. Students will use technology to write, collaborate and publish their works. Students in Grade 7 are required to take a semester of Exploratory Writing.

MATHEMATICS 7

In Math 7, students continue to build an understanding of mathematics as it becomes more abstract and less concrete. They demonstrate their understanding through written and oral explanations. Topics include basic number operations, rational numbers (fractions, decimals, and percents), proportional relationships (ratios), exponent properties and scientific notation, patterns and functions (linear equations), geometrical transformations, and statistics and probability. There is an emphasis on developing the ability to determine the reasonableness of answers.

ALGEBRA 1

Algebra 1 delivers a rigorous and authentic curriculum that incorporates components of the Common Core Standards (CCSS) for mathematics. Students will be provided with a strong foundation in algebra while also preparing them for future study of higher-level mathematics. The students will explore the language of algebra in verbal, graphical, and symbolic form. In addition, problem-solving activities and applications are incorporated within each unit and encourage students to model patterns and relationships with variables and functions, ratios and proportions, and geometric figures. The units of study emphasize the following content strands: foundations of algebra; equations and inequalities; functions; systems of equations; exponents; polynomials, and quadratics.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH 7

The Physical Education Program in Grade 7 focuses on helping to develop physically literate students who respect and value their bodies and their health. We aim to provide all students with a nurturing environment in which they feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves to grow and develop both in their physical skills and learning relationships while having fun in the process.

Over the course of the year, students will be exposed to a variety of units that are structured for fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding the application of strategy and tactics of different sports and movement forms. Interpersonal skills such as sportsmanship, offering positive feedback, and demonstrating responsible behavior are woven into the nature of team games and activities. Units can include but are not limited to: invasion games, swimming, dance, net & wall games, non-traditional games, striking & fielding, and fitness.

Through our health curriculum, students learn about a variety of topics related to their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. When put together, our program aims to empower students to have the confidence, ability, and motivation to be physically active and make healthy choices throughout their lives.

SCIENCE 7

The Grade 7 science program focuses on learning by action. Students explore science concepts through the process of scientific inquiry to learn about themselves and the world they live in. The course is divided into four sections: Matter and Chemistry, Forces and Motion, Human Body, and Watersheds. After reviewing the scientific method, students apply it to examining matter and its chemical interactions in nature. They will see how these interactions are leading to real world changes in the environment. In forces and motion, students will connect Newton's Laws of Motion to examples in their world, then apply physics to build a "lunar lander." In studying the Human Body, students are looking at the various functioning systems found within their bodies through experimentation and dissection, while focusing on the interconnected relationships of the respiratory, digestive, and circulatory systems. The Watersheds unit examines the role of waterways in the development of healthy communities and ecosystems.

SOCIAL STUDIES 7

The Grade 7 Social Studies curriculum covers world civilizations from the 1st through the 16th century. The course is a thematically based exploration of the big ideas represented in history and geography. The Grade 7 theme is Ideas in Action and is focused on the following units of study: the origins of Christianity and Islam, the ideological shifts of the Middle Ages, the legacy of the Byzantine Empire, and the causes and consequences of the Renaissance. Throughout the year students will improve their ability to critically analyze historical sources, compose argumentative essays, and think critically about the past, the present, and the future. Students will improve their research and writing skills by developing argumentative essays, as well as technology skills through presentations.

TECHNOLOGY: CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES (SEMESTER)

Creative Technologies allows our students to experience the frequently changing areas of technology, media, design thinking, and innovation. Through the use of tools such as 3D printers and laser cutters, this course uses hands-on group projects that encourage collaboration and experimentation. In addition, students will use a combination of still images, video, audio animation, and computer-based interactivity to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

TECHNOLOGY: INTRODUCTION TO ROBOTICS AND CODING (SEMESTER)

This course covers the basics of computer science. Students will explore different programming languages to solve problems and build interactive programs involving graphics, animations, and simple games. In addition, students will explore how these languages are used to create robotic sculptures that interact with the environment through the use of sensors and motors. Throughout the course, students will develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and teamwork skills as they work together to complete projects and challenges.

Level one is for students who are curious about technology, who are interested in building and creating, or who want to explore careers in technology and engineering. No prior experience in robotics or coding is required. Students will progress through coding activities and physical computing projects. They will be introduced to the use of internal sensors and a variety of output devices.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL A

Mandarin Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in the target language, as well as, learning aspects of Chinese culture. Pinyin, basic strokes, components of the characters, reading, writing, and typing skills will be taught at this level. Students will also explore Chinese idioms, stories, and songs. Please note: This class is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Mandarin Level A

Mandarin Level B builds on level A Mandarin to provide further knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students continue to develop their communication skills in the target language, as well as learn deeper features of Chinese culture. Chinese idioms will continue to be introduced to students. Character writing, sentence structures, creating dialogues, dictionary skills, and reading will be taught at this level. Please note: This class is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL A

Spanish Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in the target language, as well as learning aspects of Spanish culture. Students will also explore Spanish stories and songs. Basic vocabulary, grammar, and speaking with daily oral exercises will be introduced at this level. This class is not for native Spanish speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Spanish Level A

Spanish Level B builds on Spanish Level A to provide further knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students continue to develop their communication skills in the target language, as well as learn deeper features of Spanish culture. Spanish stories and songs will continue to be introduced to students. Sentence structures, dialogues, dictionary skills, and reading will be taught at this level. This class is not for native Spanish speakers.

Electives

ART 7 (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

The Visual Art program in Grade 7 is focused on the development of creative thinking and expression. Students will apply a variety of methods to overcome creative blocks, and visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art. Students will demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials and techniques. They will also demonstrate an awareness of ethical responsibility in relation to plagiarism and social media. Different aspects of drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, digital art, and ceramics will be taught. All art is showcased in an online gallery, displayed regularly throughout the school, and in a public exhibition at the end of the year.

BEGINNING BAND (YEAR)

This is a year-long performance course offering students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who is interested in beginning to play a band instrument. The school has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for use by students. This course is not suitable for students wishing to play guitar or keyboard only. Music literary skills form an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

INTERMEDIATE BAND (YEAR)

Prerequisite: Beginning Band or 1+ years experience

This is a year-long performance course offering students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who currently plays a band or orchestral instrument and is aimed at players who have one or more years of experience on their instruments. The school has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for use by students. This course is not suitable for students wishing to play guitar or keyboard only. Music literary skills form an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs as well as more advanced playing techniques and expressive interpretation of music. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

CHOIR (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

Choir is a performance class with an emphasis on vocal performance in an ensemble setting. This course is designed for students in grades 7 and 8 with little or no background in vocal training or choral performance and is an option for students who want to participate in classroom music but do not wish to study an instrument. The course will cover basic tone production, breathing techniques, sight-reading and ensemble training. As well, critical listening skills as they pertain to vocalists will be developed so that students can gain an understanding of modern singing styles and techniques. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

CREATIVE WRITING: EXPRESS YOURSELF (SEMESTER)

This Creative Writing course is for those students who want to develop their writing skills and bring their imagination to life through creative expression. As authors, we will explore different genres of writing including memoir, fantasy/sci-fi, poetry, short stories, and journaling as well as wherever our students' interests take us. We will learn the techniques used by professional writers and read mentor texts from a variety of authors and poets. At the end of this course, students will emerge as better readers, writers, thinkers, and confident content creators. We may even be so bold as to start a literary journal to share our awesomeness. Every best-selling author had to start somewhere. As a future best-seller, why not begin your journey here?

BEGINNING DANCE (SEMESTER)

This semester-long dance elective is designed to promote an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. This course is designed for students with little to no dance experience. However, students of all dance abilities and grade levels are welcome. The elements included in this course will promote a solid dance technique and allow students to become familiar with jazz dance terminology as well as a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. As there is no set subscribed music, students will have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and is currently popular. The course will also cultivate an understanding of the modern jazz dance genre by developing the students' physical abilities to display dance movement in an expressive and artistic way. The use of space, an awareness of an audience, and a strong sense of performance are all building blocks of this course, culminating in a final practical examination that could be locally or internationally examined, depending on the readiness of the students.

INTERMEDIATE DANCE (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

Prerequisite: Beginning Dance (exception only by teacher approval)

This is a year-long course designed for students with previous dance experience, especially students who have successfully completed the Beginning Dance elective course and external examination. Students of all grade levels are welcome. The course is aimed at promoting an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. The elements included in this course will further promote a solid dance technique and allow students to continue studying and strengthening their existing dance skills and dance terminology. They will be exposed to a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. As there is no set subscribed music, students will have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and is currently popular. The course will also cultivate an understanding of the modern jazz dance genre by further developing the students' physical abilities to display dance movement in an expressive and artistic way. The use of space, an awareness of an audience, and a strong sense of performance are all building blocks of this course, culminating in a final practical examination at Intermediate level, that could be locally or internationally examined, depending on the readiness of the students.

DRAMA 7 (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

Drama 7 builds upon skills that were introduced in Exploratory Drama 6. The course will focus on how to use voice and body expression clearly both on and off stage. Students will have the opportunity to create and perform a variety of drama pieces. Students will develop physical theatre skills and devise short comic physical performances, presenting them with music, lighting, costume, and props. Following this, they will focus on how to use voice to explore a short script, focusing on emotion, time, place, and meaning. Students in this class should consider themselves members of a cast, which means they will be on the same team working toward the same goals. The semester-long class will culminate in a final drama showcase that will allow students to demonstrate the skills and confidence they have built over the course of the class.

PUBLIC SPEAKING 7/8 (SEMESTER)

In Public Speaking 7/8, students will develop speech and language skills that will help them in their classes, in university, and onward into their chosen careers. Beginning with basic formal speaking techniques and moving toward public speaking opportunities, this semester-long course will allow students to practice speaking styles such as formal speech, debate, storytelling, and impromptu speaking. The course is designed for both hesitant speakers and confident performers: students will progress at different levels and paces throughout the course. Students can expect 2-4 formal speaking opportunities to audiences outside the classroom.

YEARBOOK (YEAR)

Over the course of the year, yearbook students will create the annual SSIS Middle School Yearbook. During this year-long course, students will have the opportunity to explore digital photography, graphic design, and journalism. This course emphasizes working collaboratively to learn the process of publishing a yearbook with accuracy, effective photography, design layout, and equal student representation. Students will also focus on professional communication skills and time management.

8th Grade Requirements

All Grade 8 students will be enrolled in the following courses. All courses are full-year courses unless otherwise noted:

Core classes:

1. English Language Arts
2. Exploratory Writing (semester)
3. Mathematics
4. Physical Education and Health
5. Science
6. Social Studies
7. World Language (Mandarin or Spanish), English as an Additional Language, or Learning Support

Elective classes:

Elective from the following choices. Grade 8 students select 1.5 electives; 1 full year course + 1 semester course OR 3 semester courses:

- Art 8 (year or semester)
- Beginning Band (year)
- Intermediate Band (year)
- Choir (year or semester)
- Creative Writing 7/8 (semester)
- Beginning Dance (year or semester) -
- Intermediate Dance (year or semester)
- Drama 8 (year or semester)
- Public Speaking 7/8 (semester)
- Technology: Creative Technologies (semester)
- Technology: Introduction to Robotics and Coding (semester)
- Technology: Advanced Robotics and Coding (semester)
- Yearbook (year)

Core Required Courses

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS 8

The SSIS English Language Arts program places a strong emphasis on developing students' skill in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to help them become critical readers, writers, and thinkers. The workshop method, which prioritizes student choice and inquiry, provides opportunities to explore key elements of various narrative, informational, argumentative, and literary texts through reading and writing. The English Language Arts program's goal is to provide students with rigorous and meaningful learning activities that help them build the literacy skills necessary for college and career.

EXPLORATORY WRITING 8 (SEMESTER)

The SSIS writing program is a semester class that emphasizes student development in writing across the curriculum for various purposes and audiences. The types of writing explored include persuasive writing and literary analysis. Students will use technology to write, collaborate and publish their works. Students in Grade 8 are required to take a semester of Exploratory Writing.

MATHEMATICS 8

In Grade 8 Math, students solidify the basic principles of algebra and geometry through hands-on activities, everyday examples, and relevant practice. Areas of focus include rational numbers; exponents and roots; simplifying and solving single and multiple-step algebraic equations; solving equations/problems that involve ratios, proportions, percents, perimeter, area, and volume; writing, graphing, and recognizing linear, exponential, and quadratic functions; and recognizing and solving problems that relate to angles and various shapes in geometry.

ALGEBRA 1

Algebra 1 delivers a rigorous and authentic curriculum that incorporates components of the Common Core Standards (CCSS) for mathematics. Students will be provided with a strong foundation in algebra while also preparing them for future study of higher-level mathematics. The students will explore the language of algebra in verbal, graphical, and symbolic form. In addition, problem-solving activities and applications are incorporated within each unit and encourage students to model patterns and relationships with variables and functions, ratios and proportions, and geometric figures. The units of study emphasize the following content strands: foundations of algebra; equations and inequalities; functions; systems of equations; exponents; polynomials, and quadratics.

GEOMETRY, STATISTICS, AND PROBABILITY

The Geometry, Statistics, and Probability course covers the foundation of geometric reasoning and an exploration of the basics of statistics and probability. During the first half of the course, students will focus on two and three dimensional geometry, relationships between points, angles, lines and planes, congruent triangles, and right angled triangle trigonometry. The second half of the course explores types of data, data collection, basic statistical measures, relative frequency, theoretical probability, Venn diagrams, and expected value

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH 8

The Physical Education Program in Grade 8 focuses on helping to develop physically literate students who respect and value their bodies and their health. We aim to provide all students with a nurturing environment in which they feel comfortable taking risks and challenging themselves to grow and develop both in their physical skills and learning relationships while having fun in the process.

Over the course of the year, students will be exposed to a variety of units that are structured for fitness, skill acquisition, and understanding the application of strategy and tactics of different sports and movement forms. Interpersonal skills such as sportsmanship, offering positive feedback, and demonstrating responsible behavior are woven into the nature of team games and activities. Units can include but are not limited to: invasion games, swimming, dance, net & wall games, non-traditional games, striking & fielding, and fitness.

Through our health curriculum, students learn about a variety of topics related to their physical, mental, social, and emotional health. When put together, our program aims to empower students to have the confidence, ability, and motivation to be physically active and make healthy choices throughout their lives.

SCIENCE 8

The Grade 8 science program focuses on different types of learning environments. Students explore concepts through traditional lessons and inquiry labs, independent units, and big project learning. This course will focus on the theme of change as it occurs in human genetics and ecosystems, weather and climate, and chemical and atomic interactions. Each unit of study will be approached by the student from a different angle, both in content and learning style. Students will extend their knowledge of elements, chemical reactions, and chemical bonding, investigate the key to genetic inheritance and diversity, study the natural processes of ecosystems and our environment, and investigate the change in our climate and its effects on individuals and humanity as a whole.

SOCIAL STUDIES 8

The Grade 8 Social Studies curriculum covers world civilizations from the 16th through the 20th century. The course is a thematically based exploration of the big ideas represented in history and geography. The Grade 8 theme is Conflict and Change and is focused on the following units of study: the Age of Exploration, mercantilism and capitalism, absolutism, the scientific revolution, the age of Enlightenment, Revolutions, and the rise of Nationalism. Throughout the year students will improve their ability to critically analyze historical sources, compose argumentative essays, and think critically about the past, the present, and the future.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL A

Mandarin Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in the target language, as well as, learning aspects of Chinese culture. Pinyin, basic strokes, components of the characters, reading, writing, and typing skills will be taught at this level. Students will also explore Chinese idioms, stories, and songs. This class is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Mandarin Level A

Mandarin Level B builds on level A Mandarin to provide further knowledge and skills of the Mandarin Chinese language. Students continue to develop their communication skills in the target language, as well as learn deeper features of Chinese culture. Chinese idioms will continue to be introduced to students. Character writing, sentence structures, creating dialogues, dictionary skills and reading will be taught at this level. This class is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: MANDARIN LEVEL C

Prerequisite: Mandarin Level B

Students in Mandarin Level C continue to develop their language skills, learning more complex grammatical constructions, while developing their listening and reading competencies. Students use the language for authentic communication and presentation. As a result, the students will gain a better understanding of the issues of Chinese communities and the Chinese language and culture. An interactive classroom environment enriches this cultural language and culture study. This class is not for native Mandarin speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL A

Spanish Level A provides basic knowledge and skills of the Spanish language. Students develop their beginning communication skills in the target language, as well as learning aspects of Spanish culture. Students will also explore Spanish stories and songs. Basic vocabulary, grammar, and speaking with daily oral exercises will be introduced at this level. This class is not for native Spanish speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL B

Prerequisite: Spanish Level A

Students in Spanish Level B continue to develop their skills in Spanish, mastering new vocabulary, learning more grammatical constructions, and developing their listening and reading competencies. Students use the language for authentic communication and presentation. Students learn to read stories in Spanish to help them understand the structure of the language as well as the culture of Spanish-speaking communities. This class is not for native Spanish speakers.

WORLD LANGUAGE: SPANISH LEVEL C

Prerequisite: Spanish Level B

Students in Spanish Level C continue to develop their language skills, learning more complex grammatical constructions, while developing their listening and reading competencies. Students use the language for authentic communication and presentation. As a result, the students gain a better understanding of the Spanish language and culture. An interactive classroom environment enriches this language and culture study. This class is not for native Spanish speakers.

Electives

ART 8 (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

The MS Visual Art program in Grade 8 is focused on the development of creative thinking and expression. Students will experience different aspects of drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, digital art, and ceramics. Students peer assess, self-assess, and reflect regularly throughout the course. They work in groups, pairs, and individually. Students participate regularly in discussions linking to core classes, community, the Sustainable Development Goals, and service whenever possible. Students are assessed through the lens of the Studio Habits. All work is documented in an online journal and exhibited throughout the year physically and virtually.

BEGINNING BAND (YEAR)

This is a year-long performance course offering students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who is interested in beginning to play a band instrument. The school has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for use by students. This course is not suitable for students wishing to play guitar or keyboard only. Music literary skills form an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

INTERMEDIATE BAND (YEAR)

Prerequisite: Beginning Band or 1+ years experience

This is a year-long performance course offering students the opportunity to participate in a large instrumental ensemble. This course is aimed at any student who currently plays a band or orchestral instrument and is aimed at players who have one or more years of experience on their instruments. The school has a range of brass and woodwind instruments available for use by students. This course is not suitable for students wishing to play guitar or keyboard only. Music literary skills form an important aspect of this course. Students will read, write and interpret basic musical notation on the treble and bass clefs as well as more advanced playing techniques and expressive interpretation of music. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

CHOIR (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

Choir is a performance class with an emphasis on vocal performance in an ensemble setting. This course is designed for students in grades 7 and 8 with little or no background in vocal training or choral performance and is an option for students who want to participate in classroom music but do not wish to study an instrument. The course will cover basic tone production, breathing techniques, sight-reading, and ensemble training. As well, critical listening skills as they pertain to vocalists will be developed so that students can gain an understanding of modern singing styles and techniques. Students will participate in two major performances during the school year.

CREATIVE WRITING: EXPRESS YOURSELF (SEMESTER)

This Creative Writing course is for those students who want to develop their writing skills and bring their imagination to life through creative expression. As authors, we will explore different genres of writing including memoir, fantasy/sci-fi, poetry, short stories, and journaling as well as wherever our students' interests take us. We will learn the techniques used by professional writers and read mentor texts from a variety of authors and poets. At the end of this course, students will emerge as better readers, writers, thinkers, and confident content creators. We may even be so bold as to start a literary journal to share our awesomeness. Every best-selling author had to start somewhere. As a future best-seller, why not begin your journey here? Please note: students may only take this course once during middle school.

BEGINNING DANCE (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

This semester-long dance elective is designed to promote an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. This course is designed for students with little to no dance experience. However, students of all dance abilities and grade levels are welcome. The elements included in this course will promote a solid dance technique and allow students to become familiar with jazz dance terminology as well as a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. As there is no set subscribed music, students will have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and is currently popular. The course will also cultivate an understanding of the modern jazz dance genre by developing the students' physical abilities to display dance movement in an expressive and artistic way. The use of space, an awareness of an audience, and a strong sense of performance are all building blocks of this course, culminating in a final practical examination that could be locally or internationally examined, depending on the readiness of the students.

INTERMEDIATE DANCE (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

Prerequisite: Beginning Dance (exception only by teacher approval)

This is a year-long course designed for students with previous dance experience, especially students who have successfully completed the Beginning Dance elective course and external examination. Students of all grade levels are welcome. The course is aimed at promoting an appreciation and enjoyment of dance, through both understanding and performance. The elements included in this course will further promote a solid dance technique and allow students to continue studying and strengthening their existing dance skills and dance terminology. They will be exposed to a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms. As there is no set subscribed music, students will have the opportunity to perform to music that is appropriate in speed and is currently popular. The course will also cultivate an understanding of the modern jazz dance genre by further developing the students' physical abilities to display dance movement in an expressive and artistic way. The use of space, an awareness of an audience, and a strong sense of performance are all building blocks of this course, culminating in a final practical examination at Intermediate level, that could be locally or internationally examined, depending on the readiness of the students.

DRAMA 8 (YEAR OR SEMESTER)

Drama 8 will focus on how to use voice and body expressions clearly both on and off stage. Students will have the opportunity to create and perform a variety of drama pieces. Students will participate in multiple semi-formal and formal performances for peers and the broader school community. Students will focus on how to use voice and movement to explore short scripts, focusing on emotion, time, place, and meaning. Students in this class should consider themselves members of a cast, which means they will be on the same team working toward the same goals. The semester-long class will culminate in a final drama showcase that will allow students to demonstrate the skills and confidence they have built over the course of the class.

PUBLIC SPEAKING 7/8 (SEMESTER)

In Public Speaking, students in grades 7 and 8 will develop speech and language skills that will help them in their classes, in university, and onward into their chosen careers. Beginning with basic formal speaking techniques and moving toward public speaking opportunities, this semester-long course will allow students to practice speaking styles such as formal speech, debate, storytelling, and impromptu speaking. The course is designed for both hesitant speakers and confident performers: students will progress at different levels and paces throughout the course. Students can expect 2-4 formal speaking opportunities to audiences outside the classroom.

TECHNOLOGY: CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES (SEMESTER)

Creative Technologies allows our students to experience the frequently changing areas of technology, media, design thinking, and innovation. Through the use of tools such as 3D printers and laser cutters, this course uses hands-on group projects that encourage collaboration and experimentation. In addition, students will use a combination of still images, video, audio animation, and computer-based interactivity to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

TECHNOLOGY: INTRODUCTION TO ROBOTICS AND CODING (SEMESTER)

This course covers the basics of computer science. Students will explore different programming languages to solve problems and build interactive programs involving graphics, animations, and simple games. In addition, students will explore how these languages are used to create robotic sculptures that interact with the environment through the use of sensors and motors. Throughout the course, students will develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and teamwork skills as they work together to complete projects and challenges.

Level one is for students who are curious about technology, who are interested in building and creating, or who want to explore careers in technology and engineering. No prior experience in robotics or coding is required. Students will progress through coding activities and physical computing projects. They will be introduced to the use of internal sensors and a variety of output devices.

TECHNOLOGY: ADVANCED ROBOTICS AND CODING (SEMESTER)

Prerequisite: Introduction to Robotics and Coding (previously named Robotics and Coding)

This course covers the basics of computer science. Students will explore different programming languages to solve problems and build interactive programs involving graphics, animations, and simple games. In addition, students will explore how these languages are used to create robotic sculptures that interact with the environment through the use of sensors and motors. Throughout the course, students will develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and teamwork skills as they work together to complete projects and challenges.

Advanced Robotics and Coding is for students who have completed Introduction to Robotics and Coding or students who have extensive prior coding experience and are ready to take their skills to the next level with the approval of the classroom instructor. Students should have a strong understanding of programming concepts, including control structures and algorithms, and be comfortable working with a visual coding language. The focus for this level is on coding external input and output devices and creating physical projects.

YEARBOOK (YEAR)

Over the course of the year, yearbook students will create the annual SSIS Middle School Yearbook. During this year-long course, students will have the opportunity to explore digital photography, graphic design, and journalism. This course emphasizes working collaboratively to learn the process of publishing a yearbook with accuracy, effective photography, design layout, and equal student representation. Students will also focus on professional communication skills and time management.

Support Services (Grades 6-8)

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL)

SSIS offers an English as an Additional Language (EAL) program for students who are further developing their academic English skills. The EAL support service prepares students to use academic language in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, focusing on skills needed across the curriculum. The program stresses vocabulary development, sentence fluency, grammar, and academic writing structures.

EAL students in Grades 6-8 receive English language support through small-group EAL classes. Class sizes are limited, allowing for individualized instruction and enabling students to gain confidence in a risk-free environment. EAL courses generally take the place of either a foreign language or elective. In addition to EAL courses, some students also receive direct content-area support through a co-teaching model. The EAL teacher and content-area teachers collaborate, plan, and team-teach in Science, Social Studies, Math, or Language Arts classrooms to ensure that English Language Learners can successfully access the core curriculum.

Students are placed in the EAL program based on a combination of performance in core classes, an English language proficiency test, and teacher recommendations. Students exit the program when they have passed set criteria in each of these areas.

LEARNING SUPPORT

SSIS offers Learning Support services, which provide individualized assistance and differentiation so that students can reach their full potential as successful, confident, and independent learners. The goal of Learning Support services is to provide individual students who have identified learning needs with skills and strategies to help them be successful with the SSIS curriculum. Specifically, the Learning Support services assist students with learning needs through the following:

- Providing the academic and emotional support needed to achieve success with the academic curriculum
- Instilling confidence so that students will realize and believe that they can achieve success in their coursework
- Equipping students with the tools and strategies necessary to achieve success at school.

Students receiving Learning Support services in Grades 6-8 receive direct support through small-group Learning Strategies classes. Class sizes are limited, allowing for individualized instruction and enabling students to gain confidence in a risk-free environment. Learning Strategies courses generally take the place of either a modern world language or elective. In addition to Learning Strategies class, some students also receive direct content-area support through a co-teaching model. The Learning Strategies teacher and content-area teachers collaborate and use a wide range of strategies to ensure that students in the Learning Support program can successfully access the core curriculum.

Students are placed in the Learning Support program based on a variety of factors. First, new students with mild learning needs who can be supported through differentiation and accommodations in the mainstream classroom setting may be accepted into the Learning Support program at SSIS. These students may have received Learning Support services at their previous school. If students are already enrolled at SSIS, they may be referred for Learning Support through the Student Support Team process (SST). The SST is a collaborative process involving school personnel as well as students and their parents. A recommendation for Learning Support service is made following a thorough investigation of the student's learning needs. Once students are identified, the team, composed of the student, parents, Learning Support teacher, core teacher, and administration develops an Individual Learning Plan. The plan includes services, accommodations, and specific instructional goals. Parents are updated regularly regarding their student's progress. Given the student's progress, they may exit the program when they have passed set criteria and demonstrate self-advocacy skills successfully across their classes.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISORY

An integral component at the middle school level is our advisory program. The purpose of the MS advisory program is to help students develop the mindset, skills, and disposition to navigate their middle school years and beyond. The SSIS MS advisory program is built upon positive psychology and supports students in their development and demonstration of the aim to help students to thrive during their middle school years as well as be equipped to later lead purposeful lives as global citizens.

Small groups of students are assigned to a middle school faculty member who serves as their advisor. This advisor acts as a personal mentor and provides academic, social, and personal guidance. In addition to program material, student needs outside of the regular academic program are addressed. Advisors get to know the unique characteristics and needs of each individual. As a result, this program promotes meaningful student, teacher, peer, and community relationships. Advisory class results in student academic success, improved self-esteem, and social success.

WEEK WITHOUT WALLS

A significant event for the middle school is Week Without Walls (WWW). The WWW program is an exciting opportunity for all middle school students to extend their learning beyond the classroom walls. Exploring and learning about Vietnam, extending curriculum skills and content, and developing our Core Values are the three primary goals of the WWW program. Students will embark on their exciting journey as a grade level; and will spend 4-5 days learning, growing, and making memories that will last a lifetime. This valuable experience helps students further develop their independence, collaboration skills, and confidence. Please note that during the current pandemic, WWW has been and will continue to be adjusted and adapted to fit the current situation, restrictions, and safety requirements.





SSIS

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