

Sandia Preparatory School

Middle School Curriculum Guide

2009-2010

SANDIA  PREP

Sandia Preparatory School

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OUR MISSION

Sandia Prep is an independent coed school with a college prep program for grades 6 through 12 on one campus. The joy of learning and living is at the center of all we do. We provide a well balanced program where the school, as an extension of families, supports the quest for human excellence and individual growth.



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WELCOME TO SANDIA PREP!

Our Middle School is a lively place where students develop close relationships with teachers and with their fellow students. We believe this web of relationships makes it possible for our students to take risks in a variety of areas. They can learn where their talents lie and develop the skills they need to grow intellectually and academically.

We also believe it is important for Middle School students to learn skills in context. In particular, we teach thinking and study skills in each discipline rather than teaching them individually. At Sandia Prep, we want our students to discover the connections between subjects and to use these discoveries to explore and understand the world around them.

GRADE 6

Our 6th grade program focuses on fostering a joy in learning and teaches our students the skills necessary to feel confident in their abilities as learners. We believe it is important for students to have a solid background in reading and writing; therefore, our students meet an extended class session in language arts class five days in a six-day rotation. With its focus on geography, our social studies course allows students to explore the connections between their community and the larger world. In science, we provide hands-on activities and stimulate students' curiosities as they deepen their scientific literacy. We hone students' fundamental skills in our math program and introduce them to more sophisticated mathematical concepts. Our art and media rotation exposes students to a variety of experiences and skills in drama, visual art, music, and computer skills, and explores the transitions young people make from childhood to adolescence. Our physical education program stresses the importance of lifelong fitness and team skills.

English

Language Arts

Students read novels, short stories, poetry, and myths. Students also are encouraged and required to read a wide selection of recommended independent reading books in various categories, including fiction, biography, science fiction, and the classics. We include literary criticism so that students learn both to experience and to respond to literature.

Fundamental to Language Arts is the teaching of writing, both expository and creative. Children learn to write well by practicing; Prep students write all the time. Writing skills — including grammar, punctuation, spelling, parts of speech, and vocabulary building — are developed through an emphasis on the writing process: students write, revise, and rewrite. We introduce students to writing an essay so that they learn to present an idea in a well developed argument.

Art & Media Rotation

This rotation gives students the opportunity to discover new interests and skills while exploring a variety of fields. The rotation consists of the following five seven-week classes: Art, Computer, Drama, Foreign Language, and Music. Through this rotation, we hope students will enjoy learning as they take risks in new disciplines.

Art

In the 6th grade Art course, we encourage creativity in our students through exploration and invention in the visual arts. The students work in drawing, painting, printmaking, clay, and sculpture. Not only do they learn how to work in many different media, they also learn principles of design and color.

Computer

The 6th grade Computer rotation will help students learn how to use the technology available at Sandia Prep. Students will learn more about word processing, multimedia presentations and Internet research, as well as how to connect to the campus file and print services. Time will also be spent daily learning the basics of touch keyboarding. These topics will be covered to help the students get started on a lifetime of using computers.

Introduction to Theater and Dance

In Drama, students actively participate in improvisations, theater games, and creative dramatic presentations. Our students also have the opportunity to make their own videos. We work with our students to help them feel comfortable in front of an audience and confident in themselves. Additionally, techniques of ballet and jazz will be covered, and a dance performance will conclude the rotation.

French and Spanish

French and Spanish rotation is designed to introduce students to the French and Spanish languages and cultures. Students will spend three and one-half weeks learning French and three and one-half weeks learning Spanish. Students will participate in activities such as games, songs, videos, holiday celebrations, theater and short dialogues. Students will learn introductory words and phrases, including "What is your name?" and "Where are you from?", the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, animals, time and colors. There will be more challenging activities for those students who may previously have had foreign language instruction in either French or Spanish.

Music

This course introduces the student to the fundamentals of music literacy and score reading, the essentials of healthy vocal production and the exploration of instrumental music making, as well as gaining an appreciation and understanding of a variety of styles and traditions of music.

Fine Arts Electives

Sixth Grade Chorus

Sixth Grade Chorus is offered as an Ensemble/Study Hall elective at the Sixth Grade level. The Chorus rehearses two days out of the rotating class cycle, and the remained days are devoted to Study Hall. This is a non-auditioned ensemble, and all are welcome to join. Emphasis is given to the development of vocal technique, including: singing posture, breath management, diction, and expression, through singing texts representative of a wide diversity of cultures and historical periods, as well as score study and sight reading. Quarterly concerts are given, and there are numerous opportunities for students to audition for solos, Elementary Allstate Chorus, and Solo and Ensemble festivals.

Beginning Guitar – Grades 6, 7, 8

This course is open to any middle school students who want to begin the study of guitar or to those with less than a year of guitar experience. Students will explore traditional music notation (notes, rhythms, etc.) as well as tablature, chords, ensembles, and a wide variety of musical styles. Students must provide their own guitar (acoustic or electric).

Advanced Guitar – Grades 6, 7, 8

This course is open to any middle school student who has had at least one year of guitar study. Activities begun in the Beginning Guitar Class will be continued with more emphasis on music theory, improvisation, and ensemble playing. Students must provide their own instrument (acoustic or electric).

Middle School Strings – Grades 6, 7, 8

Orchestral instruction in violin, viola, cello, and bass. Students of all skill levels welcome, including beginners. Students will develop fundamental individual and ensemble skills as they prepare and perform diverse types of music.

Beginning Band – Grades 6, 7, 8, 9

Beginning band offers first time instrumental students the opportunity to gain skills and experience with an active performing ensemble. While previous experience on the piano or other instruments is helpful, no prior experience is necessary. Students explore basic instrumental technique on any woodwind, bass, or percussion instrument of their choice. The class focuses on sound production, note reading, playing in tune, playing together, and performance. It is open to any student in grades 6 through 9. Rehearsals are twice a week for one hour directly after school.

Intermediate Band – Grades 6, 7, 8, 9

Basic skills are reinforced with technical exercises and challenging band arrangements. The music is arranged specially for band members to show strength in instrumentation. This band is also a training ground for the Upper School jazz band, and jazz arrangement and improvisation are part of the daily rehearsals along with more traditional repertoire in the form of marches, suites, and other arrangements of classical works. This band is a supportive, performance-oriented ensemble that will be participating in local music festivals throughout the year. It is open to any student in grades 6 through 9 with at least one year instrumental experience. Rehearsals are twice a week for one hour directly after school.

Middle School Jazz Band – Grades 6, 7, 8

This ensemble is open to all instrumentalists (wind, percussion, piano, bass or guitar) with limited playing experience who are capable of performing level I band literature. Beginners are encouraged to take private lessons. The band will participate in four concerts during the school year.

History

World Cultures & Geography

Our primary goal in Social Studies is to encourage students to appreciate learning about people, places, and cultures and to develop their geographic literacy. Atlases, almanacs, novels, textbook, films, computer databases, and the Internet are among the resources used as we travel to Asia, Africa, and South America, among other places. The classroom and the library provide the setting for the learning and practice of research and note-taking skills. A variety of written materials stimulate discussion, pique interest, and encourage critical thinking about local, national, and international topics. Writing assignments and oral debates foster the expression of personal opinions founded on research and analysis of information.

Mathematics

Foundations of Mathematics

In this course, we develop students' skills in basic calculations with whole numbers, decimals, and fractions while deepening their understanding of number systems and problem-solving techniques. The curriculum includes a variety of mathematical experiences, including the use of calculators, games, and other manipulatives. Whenever possible, we teach students to apply the mathematics concepts they have studied to real-life situations and examples. We also investigate additional

topics, including ratios and percents, measurement, number theory, and statistics and probability.

Physical Education

6th Grade Physical Education

We teach our students basic movement and sports-related skills, such as ball handling, agility, balance, and eye-hand coordination so they may compete in, understand, and enjoy as many activities as possible. As part of this class, we also focus on lifelong fitness and determine how physically fit our students are. Among the activities we pursue are basketball, field hockey, soccer, volleyball, and track and field events.

Science

General Science

In this course, we foster excitement and curiosity while introducing students to many disciplines in science. Through hands-on activities and labs, we investigate life science, earth science, physical science, and astronomy in detail. Students are free to ask questions and explore individual interests while developing such skills as observation, communication, classification, inference, hypothesis, interpretation, and cooperative learning.

GRADE 7

Our 7th grade program is designed to provide students with a multitude of opportunities to explore their relationship with the world around them while, at the same time, developing and refining the skills necessary to understand and negotiate the many worlds they encounter, including both school and community.

English

English

Students study literary genre, including the short story, plays, and poetry. We pay close attention to defining such terms as plot, theme, setting, and characterization. We read an anthology of short stories and poems as well as at least three novels and perhaps a play. We encourage outside reading at regular intervals. As we discuss and write about literature, students study grammar, usage, spelling, and vocabulary in order to extend their proficiencies in reading and writing. We assign analytical paragraphs, descriptive paragraphs, book reports, and other literature-based essays.

The course continues our emphasis on the importance of strong reading and strong writing. Students will write other types of essays than the literary essay: arguments, persuasive pieces, personal narratives and creative pieces.

Art & Media Rotation

This rotation helps our 7th grade students discover their own creativity as they learn the skills and techniques of these artistic disciplines. Each of the three courses lasts 12 weeks. Teachers strive to help students express themselves while using the new skills they acquire in Art, Drama, and Photography.

Art

In this course, students draw, paint, sculpt, make prints, construct collages, and make clay pots. As they use various media, students learn the elements and principles of design by letting their own forms take shape.

Drama

In drama, we teach our students how to put on a play. From choosing the script to striking the set, students find their creative abilities stimulated, their aesthetic senses heightened, and their technical and dramatic skills refined.

Photography

This photography class provides a hands-on introduction to the materials and processes of black and white photography. With an emphasis on the proper handling of photosensitive films and papers, 35mm camera use, and working in a darkroom, we create photograms, build a pinhole camera, construct photo-collages, develop black and white film, and make enlargements. With each unit, the students gain a further understanding of the photographic process while being challenged to create unique solutions to photographic problems.

7th Grade Electives

Advanced Middle School Chorus

Advanced Middle School Chorus is offered as an Ensemble/Study Hall elective at the Seventh and Eighth Grade levels combined. The Chorus rehearses three days out of the rotating class cycle, and the remaining two days are devoted to Study Hall. This is a non-auditioned ensemble and all are welcome to join. An advanced emphasis is given to the young singer's development of a healthy vocal technique, solid musicianship, and furthered opportunities for

expressive singing, through singing texts representative of a wide diversity of culture and historical periods. Quarterly concerts are given, and there are numerous opportunities for students to audition for solos, Middle School Allstate Chorus, and Solo and Ensemble festivals.

Middle School Jazz Band – Grades 6, 7, 8

This ensemble is open to all instrumentalists (wind, percussion, piano, bass or guitar) with limited playing experience who are capable of performing level I band literature. Beginners are encouraged to take private lessons. The band will participate in four concerts during the school year.

Middle School Jazz Ensemble

This ensemble is open to all instrumentalists (wind, percussion, piano, bass or guitar) who have the ability to perform Level II band literature and have demonstrated the understanding of music fundamentals (reading notes and rhythms) as well as correct, basic playing techniques on his/her instrument (specific requirements available from the instructor). PERMISSION OF INSTRUCTOR IS REQUIRED. The band will participate in four concerts during the school year and may perform at one jazz festival.

Beginning Guitar – Grades 6, 7, 8

This course is open to any middle school students who want to begin the study of guitar or to those with less than a year of guitar experience. Students will explore traditional music notation (notes, rhythms, etc.) as well as tablature, chords, ensembles, and a wide variety of musical styles. Students must provide their own guitar (acoustic or electric).

Advanced Guitar – Grades 6, 7, 8

This course is open to any middle school student who has had at least one year of guitar study. Activities begun in the Beginning Guitar Class will be continued with more emphasis on music theory, improvisation, and ensemble playing. Students must provide their own instrument (acoustic or electric).

Middle School Strings – Grades 6, 7, 8

Orchestral instruction in violin, viola, cello, and bass. Students of all skill levels welcome, including beginners. Students will develop fundamental individual and ensemble skills as they prepare and perform diverse types of music.

History

New Mexico and the West

This course fosters a sense of appreciation and understanding of what makes us unique as “New Mexicans.” This is done through a survey examining the history of exploration, conquest, and the merging of vastly different peoples as they create a sense of place in New Mexico. This is done by exploring the confluence of cultures, environment, and perception, which makes this history so fascinating. This is accomplished by a variety of methods including: lectures; research and discussions using novels; film; and primary and secondary sources in order to create a critical analytical approach to history.

TEXTS:

New Mexico: an Interpretative History
Red Sky at Morning
Dance Hall of the Dead
Rio Grande Stories
Various primary documents

FILMS INCLUDE:

Chisum, Fat Man and Little Boy, & assorted documentaries

Mathematics

Pre-Algebra

This course strengthens students’ mathematical skills through practical problem-solving application and thoroughly develops the abstract foundations necessary for the study of Algebra. We investigate integers, graphs, variables, open equations and inequalities, basic geometry, statistics, word problems, formulas, rational numbers, and measurement.

Modern Languages

French IA

French Ia is designed to help the student acquire a beginning level competency in the speaking, reading, and writing of French, and to introduce the student to some aspects of the Francophone world. Vocabulary units include animals, food, French speaking countries, sports, the classroom, music, and colors. Students will participate in a variety of activities to develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Many of the activities will be done in pairs and small groups to stimulate conversation and to promote cooperative learning. There are supplemental materials and activities such as videos, readings, contests and games, and holiday celebrations.

Spanish IA

In this course, we present the simple structures of Spanish in common situational contexts. We incorporate a variety of activities to develop the students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. By the end of this course, the students are able to greet others, introduce themselves and others, describe themselves and others, talk about likes and dislikes, and function with some ease in social interactions related to school, home, food, and family. We explore culture through song, dance, and holidays. Students can look forward to learning authentic children's songs, dancing to popular music, and going caroling around the school in December.

Physical Education

7th Grade Physical Education

In this course, we stress improving and refining individual skills and game strategies. We also introduce students to new and more complex skills, thus enabling them to develop confidence and a sense of mastery in the activities we pursue.

Science

Life Science

This course is designed to teach students the basic biological concepts and laboratory skills essential to the life sciences. We encourage students to become scientists and naturalists through experimentation using the scientific method, recording field observations, and conducting library research. The course emphasizes units in botany, entomology, ecology, evolution, human biology, and health and wellness. It includes projects that link our students with the community.

GRADE 8

Our 8th grade program focuses on the emergence of civilizations, the problems and possibilities that arise when various groups come together, and the relationship between the individual and the group within specific civilizations. Eighth grade students also learn about the forms fundamental to the various disciplines they study. In English, students examine various literary genres; in math, they learn pre-algebraic and algebraic expressions; and in history, they study and write historical essays.

English

English

The primary aim of this course is to stimulate a lifelong interest in literature and to introduce ways of analyzing poetry and fiction. We work to aid reading comprehension; to foster an ability to read critically; to introduce students to literary devices and terms, such as plot, point of view, narration, character development, levels of meaning, figurative language, tone, mood, setting, style, and dialect; and to promote discussion skills, such as asking relevant questions, citing appropriate textual examples, and leading discussion. We introduce literary terms and concepts early in the year and reinforce them throughout the course. In order to expose our students to a broad range of perspectives, we read four novels, a play, and a variety of short stories written by a diverse group of authors. We discuss, read aloud, and analyze the works in writing assignments. Both formal and creative writing projects require students to manipulate text using their comprehension and imagination.

We emphasize personal writing and articulate discussion and grammatical skills in both writing and speaking.

Art & Media Rotation

People communicate in a variety of ways. Whether they use ukuleles, pencils, or computer keyboards as instruments, people relate to others by describing the world they live in and the experiences they have. In this rotation, students use a range of instruments and styles to learn to improve the way they communicate with others. This rotation consists of the following four eight-week classes: Computers, Music, Healthy Living, and Journalism.

Computers

This class involves refining the basic keyboarding skills learned in sixth grade as well as exploring a variety of computer programs useful in Upper School and life. Daily typing drills and exercises are practiced with the goal of increasing and improving students' overall typing speed and accuracy. Students receive an introduction to many useful computer applications, including word processing, spreadsheets, databases, graphics, animations, multimedia design, page layout, programming, and Internet research. Students learn to use these technologies to produce many exciting projects.

Music

This quarter-long course involves solidifying rudiments of music theory through the completion of a music theory workbook. Other units include: voice, emphasizing good posture and healthy vocal production;

ukeleles, in which chord patterns to familiar American folks songs are learned, as well as students composing an original blues song; piano, in which simple songs are learned, enabling students to play with both hands reading treble and bass clefs simultaneously. The final unit is an in-class presentation done by students on a popular group or artist of their choosing.

Journalism

This class aims to expose eighth graders to the types of journalism they will have the opportunity to explore in depth in Upper School through the yearbook and journalism electives. Students learn journalistic jargon and then produce their own individual newspapers. The process of creating their own pages enables them to experiment with all aspects of the creative process – from brainstorming to interviewing to photographing to laying out the final product. In addition, students read the daily paper and take part in media literacy-focused class discussions.

Healthy Living

This quarter-length course focuses on issues teenagers face as they attempt to live safe and healthy lives. A discussion-based course, Healthy Living examines topics ranging from developing a sense of self to living safely in a sometimes unsafe world. The central question we explore is: “What constitutes a healthy life?” Topics may include nutrition, street smarts, human sexuality, and drugs — both prescription and nonprescription. This course adopts no particular point of view but is based on the notion that students need to have an informed awareness and healthy respect for life’s challenges.

8th Grade Electives

Advanced Middle School Choir

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Advanced Guitar

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Middle School String Ensemble

Orchestral instruction in violin, viola, cello, and bass. Students of all skill levels welcome, including beginners. Students will develop fundamental individual and ensemble skills as they prepare and perform diverse types of music.

Musical Theater Production

The vocal music and theater departments will team teach this production-based class for 8th-graders. Students may participate as performers (actors, singers and/or dancers), as well as technicians in set design and construction, lighting, sound, costumes, props and makeup. A full musical show will be performed at the end of each semester.

History

American Government

This course traces the origins and foundations of American Constitutional government from both philosophical and historical perspectives. We will look at the Constitution and Amendments in detail and examine their historical foundations, as well as current applications. Special attention is paid to the Bill of Rights as it applies to current and historical issues, cases, and controversies. Discussion, writing, analysis, debate, presentation, and role-playing help us synthesize information from primary and secondary sources, including text, specialty literature, and novels, and to prepare students for further historical and social inquiry.

Mathematics

Algebra IA

Eighth graders only – prerequisite is Pre-Algebra

This is the first year of a two-year long Algebra I course (Algebra IB being the second year course). It is designed for eighth grade students who would benefit from Algebra I being covered over two years instead of one, so that they might fully master the concepts needed for higher mathematics. Major topics include order of operations, algebraic equations, linear equations, inequalities, and absolute values.

Algebra I

This course develops facility in the use of mathematical concepts and provides a thorough foundation in basic Algebra essential to the study of advanced mathematics. Topics covered include (but are not limited to): operations involving integers, fractions, and polynomials; solving equations and inequalities; use of formulas; factoring polynomials; graphing linear equations; rational expressions and equations; quadratic equations; linear systems; word problems; and radical expressions and equations.

Modern Languages

French IB

French Ib emphasizes communication in everyday situations and interpersonal relationships in meaningful contexts. These include being at home and in the city, going to Paris, shopping, going to school, relaxing on weekends, and eating. Students participate in a variety of activities designed to develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Many of the activities will be done in pairs and small groups to stimulate conversation and to promote cooperative learning.

Students will also create original dialogues to simulate situations that they would encounter in a French-speaking country. There are supplemental materials and activities such as videos, readings, contests and games, and holiday celebrations.

Spanish IB

Spanish Ib is conducted almost entirely in Spanish, using the natural approach. We emphasize spoken communication and oral proficiency, while at the same time strengthening reading and writing skills. Students review and consolidate their understanding of introductory vocabulary and grammar introduced in Spanish Ia. This includes greetings; describing oneself and others; expressing likes and dislikes; and talking about school, food, sports, and weather. Students then learn to describe daily routines, give directions and talk about things which happened in the past through a variety of communicative activities including constructing their own model town and planning a party. Throughout the year, students will discover the cultural differences between Spain and Latin America through a variety of media including music and video. At the end of the year, students will be able to express themselves effectively in conversation and in basic writing exercises.

Prerequisite: Successful completion of Spanish IA or permission of instructor.

Physical Education

8th Grade Physical Education

In this course, we continue to focus on improving and refining individual skills and game strategies. We introduce students to nontraditional team sports, such as team handball and ultimate Frisbee.

Science

Physical Science

This course focuses on the physical sciences — specifically the fundamentals of physics and chemistry. Throughout the year, we emphasize the scientific method and laboratory work. This primarily hands-on course also includes discussions and lectures. Whenever possible, we try to bring in examples from the real world through historical and current events. Students learn problem-solving techniques through practical hands-on experiences.