

ARTS

In the Middle School, a vibrant Arts program features experiential courses where each student is taught to recognize, trust and express their unique creative instincts. Students are exposed to both performance and visual arts where each faculty member teaches the technical skills as well as a conceptual understanding of their medium. Individual, non-linear thought is encouraged while students grow to understand the language of each art form. Students take ownership of their work through in-class presentations where growth is assessed through critiques or written evaluations. Students' work then becomes an integral part of the school community through performance and display.

GRADE 7

Students rotate through drama, music, three-dimensional, and two-dimensional art in quarterly cycles, each class meeting four times per week.

VISUAL ARTS

Ceramics/Three-Dimensional Art

The Ceramics program at the Middle School aims to create a relaxing and supportive environment to explore three-dimensional art using hand-building clay techniques. Each class begins with a reflective prompt where students respond in clay, then share their creations to build our classroom community. Students learn ceramic building techniques and surface design techniques. They also learn about different kinds of clay & glazing options as well as firing processes. Personal expression, constructive feedback, and respectful interactions are always emphasized. Finally, contemporary and historical ceramics from various cultures are explored throughout the projects to give a basic knowledge of their importance and context for ceramics today.

Two-Dimensional Art

Two-Dimensional Art in the 7th grade is an introductory class structured around the study of the Elements of Art, which are the fundamental concepts for understanding and creating visual work. Through video resources, exposure to a variety of artist exemplars, class discussions, and a diverse range of hands-on activities, students gain a deeper understanding of how artists use the Elements even as they explore their own artistry. Students also engage in daily journal drawings as a way to develop their creative sensibilities and visual intelligence. The culminating project allows students to apply their knowledge of the Elements in a personally meaningful way.

PERFORMING ARTS

Drama

7th Grade Drama is an introduction to theatre performance. Classes focus on improvisation that will help students trust and access their creative instincts on the stage. Students create scenes and characters based on their own experiences and discuss the ways in which art relates to everyday life. Emphasis is given to learning to be supportive members of a creative group, on understanding compassion as an essential acting tool, and on the role of Theater in the community, past and present.

Music

7th Grade General Music is a skill building class that also develops prerequisite skills for 8th grade elective classes. Students study and practice rhythmic concepts, such as meter and time signatures, as well as musical information such as tempo, dynamic and articulation markings. As we bring pitch into the picture, all of the aforementioned skills are translated into musical notation. These skills and ability to utilize notation are reinforced with an original composition project, as well as singing and playing a variety of musical instruments. Lastly, students build their broader musicianship skills (such as ear training, understanding of musical form and analysis) by familiarizing themselves with multiple genres of music.

GRADE 8

Eighth graders are ready for concentrated immersion in two semester-long arts courses, which meet four times per week. Exposure to a wide variety of artistic expression in the Middle School helps students discover an area in which they can flourish. Students indicate their interests at the end of grade 7 and the Arts Department places the students in visual and/or performance arts courses for each semester.

VISUAL ARTS

Ceramics: Wheel Thrown Pottery

In 8th-grade ceramics, students are introduced to a calm and creative space to explore three-dimensional ceramic art. This class fosters a supportive atmosphere where individual expression is encouraged. The focus of this class is on teaching students how to use the pottery wheel in order to create functional pieces, such as mugs, plates, and bowls. Students will also be introduced to a variety of surface design methods to enhance their work. The course emphasizes both the visual qualities of form and surface, offering a thorough understanding of different types of clay and glazes, as well as the various firing techniques used. Personal expression, constructive critique, and respectful collaboration are central to the learning process. Additionally, students will study the rich history and significance of ceramics from different cultures, linking their work to broader artistic traditions and contemporary practices.

Ceramics: Functional Dinnerware Pottery with Surface Design & Hand-built Sculpture

In 8th-grade ceramics, students are immersed in a calming environment that encourages the exploration of both functional and sculptural ceramics. Together, we build a community that nurtures personal expression through the creation of three-dimensional art. One elective focuses on making everyday objects that we can use like mugs, plates, and bowls, while also introducing various surface design techniques. The other elective, Ceramics Sculpture, is dedicated to larger-scale sculptural projects, such as animals, expressive vessels, and boats, with opportunities to explore more advanced surface design. A key aspect of these classes is the balance between form and surface, with an emphasis on art's potential to inspire social change. Students also dive deeper into the properties of different clay bodies and glazes, learning a range of firing processes. Constructive feedback, personal growth, and mutual respect are central to the experience. Throughout the course, students explore both modern and historical ceramics from diverse cultures, providing context for how ceramics fits into today's artistic landscape.

Sketchbook

Two-Dimensional Art in the 8th grade builds upon the concepts and experiences of the 7th grade class as students engage in a more personal approach to artmaking. A sketchbook serves as the primary place where students explore skills, media, and artistic processes and also experiment with ideas, styles, and personal expression. Students will have opportunities to create work that ranges from literal, technique-driven representations to symbolic, conceptual ways of thinking, to even abstract and non-representational visualizations. The emphasis of the class is on engaging in the artistic process in a thoughtful manner, developing one's ideas with clarity and depth, demonstrating personal growth, creative problem-solving, and contributing to a positive and productive learning environment.

Comic Arts

The Comic Arts Class is an exploration of visual storytelling as an artform. Students will learn to develop narrative elements such as character, plot, setting, composition, and text as they also develop their own sense of style. Students will work individually and collaboratively to develop single short stories, longer narratives, stop-motion animation, and "fine art" inspired by the comics genre. The emphasis of the class is on engaging in the artistic process in a thoughtful manner, developing one's ideas with clarity and depth, demonstrating personal growth, creative problem-solving, and contributing to a positive and productive learning environment.

Drawing and Painting

The Drawing and Painting Class is designed to give students hands-on experiences with the artistic process as they explore imagery and meaning based on a theme of personal significance. Students have the opportunity to create five major projects, through which they explore skills of observational drawing, expressive use of color, collage and stenciling, LED light-enhancement, and acrylic painting. The emphasis of the class is on engaging in the artistic process in a thoughtful manner, developing one's ideas with clarity and depth, demonstrating personal growth, creative problem-solving, and contributing to a positive and productive learning environment.

Design and Fabrication

This 8th grade elective course will emphasize design thinking and the engineering design process in order to complete projects that make use of multiple fabrication machines and tools. We will focus on 2D + 3D design and physical computing (electronics + programming). Students will combine their knowledge across machines and disciplines, develop in giving and receiving feedback in order to improve their work, take risks, and embrace failure as a learning opportunity. Students will maintain a portfolio including design notes, prototypes, feedback, final products, and reflection

PERFORMING ARTS

Filmmaking Class

The class will write, direct, and star in several short films. The class will culminate in a "Film Premier Night" for friends and family via an online platform. Students will view past student films, learn the craft of screenplay writing, study the use of camera shots, learn acting for the camera and learn editing skills.

Musical Composition

Students will explore advanced skills in musical notation and harmonic theory in order to write their own instrumental pieces and songs. They will work on creating their own individual style by composing original melodies and adding harmonic elements. The class will explore musical styles throughout history in the standard music practice as a way of learning elements of musical style and composition. The class will explore lyric writing through a study of song compositions. Classical and modern forms will be used as models that the students can adapt. Each student will compile a portfolio of their musical compositions. For student instrumentalists, there is the possibility of in-class performances.

Rock'n Roll Is Here To Stay: A History of Rock and Roll

The Rock History class is an exploration of Rock Music set firmly within the context of 20th century American history. In addition to discussing historical content in each decade, the class discussion often includes the themes of race, gender, sexual identity, and socio-economic class. The course examines the roots and influences of Rock, including Blues, Spirituals and Gospel, Boogie Woogie, Swing, Rhythm and Blues, Doo Wop, Country, Jump Blues and Rockabilly as precursors to Rock and Roll. Rock topics may include: the role of Elvis Presley, 1955-1959, Early 60's and dances, Surf music, the Beatles, the British Invasion, Protest music, soul, Monterey, Woodstock and the Festivals, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, 70's, Prog Rock, Disco, Rap and other genres. Special attention is paid to the role of media in the development of rock, the business of music, and technological developments, such as the development of recorded sound, and the development of instruments such as electric guitars and amplifiers. Student activities may include Fantasy Rock Band, the culminating event of the semester where students draft their own rock band and take it on the road. Each class progresses at its own pace and generally covers music from 1920-1980.

8th Grade Musical

This class mounts a fully staged musical production from the Broadway repertoire. Students work together on the following musical theatre skills: in-depth character development; interpreting text through acting, music and movement; vocal expression and healthy stage vocal technique; vocal coaching; understanding the rehearsal process; tools and techniques for the stage; stagecraft and design, prop and costume design; choreography. Some students will fill the positions of stage manager, lighting technician and crew, learning the appropriate skills for the position.

Drama Festival Play/Spring Play

Students may perform at the METG Middle School Drama Festival in person or via live streaming. Throughout the rehearsal process students will explore in-depth character creation and script analysis, develop characters through voice, movement and personal history, understand the rehearsal process, learn performance technique and have the experience of being part of an acting ensemble.

PERFORMING ENSEMBLES

Students may elect to participate in several performance ensembles. These groups, Chamber Music, Jazz Band, Chorus, and the BB&N Players give students the opportunity to use their talents outside of the classroom and perform at community events.

Chorus

The Chorus is open to all students who enjoy singing. Chorus performs at Winterfest and the Spring Concert, but may also perform at assemblies and at other special occasions. The literature of Chorus ranges from classical to Broadway, from classic Rock and Roll to contemporary, with the accent on fine arrangements suitable for middle school voices. All music is in the form of choral octavos from two to four parts. Student interest or special areas of expertise will often be taken into account when choosing the repertoire of Chorus. Emphasis includes vocal hygiene and basic technical skills, posture, accuracy of pitch, enjoyment of singing, and a commitment to the group process and rehearsal skills.

Jazz Band

Jazz Band is offered to 7th and 8th grade students by audition. No previous experience in playing jazz is required. The aim of this class is to explore this unique American art form, characterized by complex, syncopated rhythm and improvisations. Students learn to interpret traditional notation and make it “swing” and to improvise melodies. Through this course students experience a spirited aspect of American culture, are challenged by new musical concepts and work at developing their own risk-taking skills.

Chamber Ensembles

The Chamber Music program at the Middle School is designed to give students the opportunity to learn the art of ensemble playing. An elective offering for students with some experience in playing a musical instrument, the program tries to be flexible to accommodate students with a broad range of musical backgrounds. Acceptance into the class is based on ability, numbers of students, and instrumentation.

The BB&N Players

The BB&N Players, an Improv Troupe, is part of the BB&N Community. The troupe assists the school in many ways including serving as assembly emcees and assisting faculty with skits for various school events such as the read-a-thon, community service and sports assemblies.