



# Middle School Curriculum Guide

2016-2017

**Middle School**

Lower School Hilbert Center

Upper School

Administrative Administration

Bath Lilly Science Center

Alvina Auditorium

Cloves Commons

Foster Hall

## Mission Statement

To create an inspiring college-preparatory learning environment, with exceptional educators and extraordinary opportunities, that prepares and motivates students to become balanced, confident, and resourceful lifelong learners.

## Our Vision

Ignite curiosity. Instill compassion. Inspire courage.

## Our Values

Integrity. Intellectual engagement. Respect. Resourcefulness. Responsibility.

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## Introduction to the Middle School

Park Tudor's Middle School for students in grades six through eight offers an academically rigorous environment with high expectations for student performance in a developmentally appropriate setting where teachers know each student personally, and students know their fellow classmates.

The Middle School combines a liberal-arts curriculum with an interdisciplinary approach to engage students. Themes for each grade level help students to understand the relationships between and among different subjects. Activities such as research assignments, class discussions and group work highlight these relationships.

Students also exercise their creativity through art, music and theatre classes, and their bodies in

physical-education classes. Digital access is available for all students, as well as ActivBoard technology.

Resources include a Middle School counselor, psychologist, advisors, and an academic coaching program, as well as on-site tutoring and homework help.

Part of the 68-acre Park Tudor campus with its extensive fine arts and athletic facilities, the Middle School is housed in its own building with a library and separate sixth-grade wing. A separate science facility includes laboratories for hands-on learning.

In addition to annual class trips within the United States, including Washington, D.C., students have international travel opportunities to destinations such as Costa Rica and Europe.



## Advisory

### Philosophy

The Advisory program takes a comprehensive approach to character growth and development. Class activities are interactive and discussion-based. The curriculum fosters a shared, school-wide commitment to character growth by encouraging students to think critically and to act with accountability. Students gain knowledge and develop skills that enable them to make informed and honorable choices. Through this process, they become proactive achievers who discover both the responsibilities and rewards of living with strong character and help to create a school environment that promotes a shared sense of community founded upon common values and core principles.

### Content

#### Sixth Grade

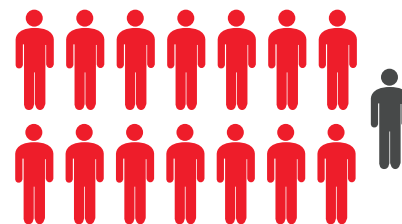
Community is the focus. Sixth-grade students learn roles and responsibilities as members of the Middle School community and as members of their larger communities outside of school. The curriculum promotes healthy relationships and positive interactions. Topics for discussion include empathy, communication, respect, fairness, conflict resolution, and Internet conduct.

#### Seventh Grade

Integrity is the focus. Students begin considering who they are, what they believe, and the personal code of conduct by which they will abide. Topics for discussion include discovering personal values, honesty, avoiding gossip, perseverance, self-evaluation, and Internet conduct.

#### Eighth Grade

Leadership is the focus. Students develop skills to become better leaders during their last year in Middle School and to prepare them for future leadership opportunities. Topics for discussion include goal setting, understanding leadership traits, understanding leadership styles, humility, team-building, and substance abuse awareness.



Middle School  
Student to Faculty Ratio  
14:1



# English

## Philosophy

The English program in the Middle School combines the study of literature and language arts in a fully integrated, differentiated classroom environment. The course content is both challenging and rigorous as befits a college-preparatory school. The content also offers students the opportunity to experience literature and language through a crosscurricular lens. The study of English from sixth through eighth grade supports the study of other subjects by exposing students to relevant content and by developing critical thinking skills necessary for all academic pursuits.

## Content Literature

Students read a variety of sophisticated texts. Teachers are careful to choose works that enhance the entire Middle School curriculum and represent a wide cross-section of literature. Sixth-grade students read classic novels such as “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” and dramas such as “The Diary of Anne Frank.” The seventh grade reads a variety of multicultural short fiction and introduces students to Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” The eighth-grade course includes “To Kill a Mockingbird” and “Animal Farm.” In addition to these core texts, students are exposed to poetry, essays, and short stories.

## Writing

The three-year course of study is writing intensive. Middle School students engage in writing strategies in various genres both in class and as homework. Students are introduced to, but not limited to: personal narrative, essays, memoirs, letters, monologues, dialogues, letters, oral histories, interviewing, note-taking, reader’s responses, research, fiction, non-fiction poetry, persuasive writing, rhetorical speech writing and literary criticism. Middle School writing is scored using the 6+1 writing traits. This method is used for formative assessment and as a tool for students to view their writing critically and objectively.

## Grammar

A comprehensive course in English grammar is taught throughout Middle School. Material is presented both in isolation and as part of the writing program. By the end of eighth grade it is expected that students master the parts of speech and have a solid comprehension of the common

vocabulary associated with grammatical concepts and mechanics.

## Vocabulary

SAT-level vocabulary is taught as a natural extension of the activities and lessons taught as part of the reading program.

# Science

## Philosophy

The Middle School science curriculum at Park Tudor instills the understanding that success in life begins with the desire to be a lifelong learner. A hands-on approach is reinforced through double lab periods in the seventh and eighth grades and a single lab period in sixth grade. This approach gives us the opportunity to develop observation, data collection and critical analysis skills. Extended lab periods reinforce concepts, allow students to demonstrate their understanding of those concepts, and apply what they have learned to new situations in Upper School and life.

## Content Sixth Grade

Sixth grade science explores the fundamental concepts of physical, life, Earth, and space sciences. Students begin the year by implementing the scientific method and experimental design, engaging in measurement techniques, and data collection, analysis, and presentation. Students learn weather and atmospheric concepts, climate, air properties, and gas laws. Space science centers upon the Earth-Sun-Moon system and classification of stars and the stellar lifecycle. Life science content focuses on the characteristics of life and taxonomy, and the physical science instruction includes coverage of the fundamentals of electricity, circuitry, magnetism, and electromagnetism. Because the 6th grade is the entry year of the Middle School’s 1:1 iPad initiative, students utilize a variety of apps and programs to maximize their engagement and learning.

## Seventh Grade

The first semester is devoted to the study of human anatomy, which entails coverage of cells and cell processes, genetics, and mammalian systems (immune, skeletal, muscular, and reproductive). Second semester is focused on Earth science; topics covered include matter and atomic structure, minerals, rocks, and plate tectonics and the effects

on earthquakes, volcanoes and other physical changes that occur on the land.

### **Eighth Grade**

This course emphasizes physics and chemistry. The curriculum includes the following concepts: motion; simple machines; work; power; energy; heat; sound and light waves; matter; the periodic table; chemical bonding; and classifications of reactions. The course's scope and sequence is designed to facilitate students' preparation for Upper School chemistry and physics.



## **Mathematics**

### **Philosophy**

The overall goal of the Middle School math curriculum is depth of understanding and a very strong foundation in algebra. To that end, we use a textbook series that includes a great deal of communication about mathematics and application for our students. Acquisition of skills is only half of the picture for Middle School students; conceptual understanding and meaningful applications comprise the other half.

The majority of students take three of the four math courses we offer in the Middle School curriculum. (In unique situations, students may be accelerated beyond some of the courses.) Students do not take a typical Pre-Algebra/Algebra 1 sequence. Instead, they take Algebra A and Algebra B over two years. At the end of this sequence they are ready for high school geometry. We do not offer remedial classes. Regardless of a child's placement they are well prepared for courses offered in the Upper School, as well as standardized tests.

### **Content**

All four courses include extensive work with computation, algebraic notation, and geometry. Some topics are introduced at early grades and developed more fully in later years.

**Math A:** Offered only at 6th grade. This course is for students who were on grade-level in 5th grade. Some topics in this course are: factors and multiples, fractions, decimals, ratios and rates, percentages, beginning algebraic expressions and equations, graphing, and two-dimensional geometry.

**Math B:** Offered at 6th and 7th grade. It is an advanced course for 6th graders or a grade-level one for 7th. The topics in this course are: rational and

real numbers, integers, intermediate expressions and equations, inequalities, proportions, three-dimensional geometry, and data analysis.

**Algebra A:** Offered at 7th and 8th grade. Seventh graders taking this course are above grade level; eighth graders in this course are at grade level. The topics in this course are: advanced algebraic expressions and equations with all types of rational numbers, solving and graphing linear inequalities, exponent properties, solving and graphing linear equations, functions, the Pythagorean Theorem, probability, and possibly similarity.

**Algebra B:** Offered in the 8th grade or Upper School. Course topics include: functions, linear functions/equations, inequalities, systems of equations, exponent laws, polynomials/factoring, quadratic functions, radical expressions/equations and rational expressions.

A more accelerated placement than the second option is available on an as-needed basis. These paths are not fixed and we continually reevaluate students as needed.

### **The Placement Process**

We use three sources of data for our placement process. The first is a nationally normed test designed to measure students' understanding of concepts essential to success in algebra. Beyond students' scores on the placement test, we look at the admissions test or ERBs (both Quantitative Reasoning and Mathematics, looking at independent school norms). Finally, we consider a student's previous math class and teacher recommendation when available.

**Acquisition of skills is only half of the picture for Middle School students; conceptual understanding and meaningful applications compose the other half.**

## Social Studies

### Philosophy

The Middle School curriculum is an integrated approach to the study of history, societies and cultures. The primary focus involves the exploration of significant historical periods and concepts, as well as exploring “essential questions,” such as how societies are influenced by geography and the environment. There is strong emphasis on development of core writing and research skills, analytical reading, and producing strong presentations – both written and oral. Geography is taught across the grade levels in the context of each unit of study. Cross disciplinary activities and a thematic emphasis are integral to the course work. We reinforce the 6+1 writing traits, encourage and model strong character, and promote respect for diverse societies – globally as well as in the United States. Students are taught that they are connected to the past and present and, with an emphasis on Community Engaged Learning, that they have a role in a global world extending far beyond their immediate boundaries.

### Content Sixth Grade

The sixth grade curriculum is a continuation of the 5th grade Humanities program and examines Western Civilizations from medieval to early modern period. A project-based course, emphasis is placed on research and writing and alignment with grade 6 English.

### Seventh Grade

The seventh grade curriculum is a topical focus on World Cultures including China, India, Africa, Latin America, and West Asia (the Middle East). It also integrates closely with grade 7 English, is writing intensive, and is a project-based course that includes the Geo-Tour.

### Eighth Grade

Grade eight history is a topical and thematic overview of the history of the United States. Current students will focus in particular on the first half of American history (i.e., from the colonial period through the Civil War). Beginning in the 2017-2018 academic year, coverage will extend to include the full range of United States history, from the colonial to the modern era. Work will remain project-based, as will thematic collaboration with grade 8 English.

## World Languages

### Philosophy

The World Languages program integrates speaking, writing, reading and cultural instruction using the target language on a daily basis. Through the study of French or Spanish, it is expected that each student will be able to apply the language in real-world situations such as simple conversations and readings.

### Spanish

A placement test is given in order to determine proper placement. Students who are not as confident in Spanish, or who are taking it for the first time, enter Spanish 6-I. In seventh grade they continue with Spanish 7-I and in eighth grade, Spanish 8-I. These students enter Spanish II as freshmen.

Students who demonstrate an affinity for Spanish and test appropriately are enrolled in Spanish 6-II. In seventh grade they continue with Spanish 7-II and in eighth grade, Spanish 8-II. These students enter Spanish III as freshmen.

### French

All students choosing French begin in French 6-I.

### Latin

As eighth-graders, some students are able to choose Latin as an additional language. As Latin is offered in our Upper School, first preference is given to Upper School students. Remaining spots are allotted to Middle School students based on current language enrollment and teacher recommendation.

### Content Vocabulary and Speaking

Vocabulary is taught in context through speaking, writing, reading and listening activities. Specific themes of applicable, often-used vocabulary are taught in order to allow the student to begin using the language as soon as possible.

Through skits, conversations and role-playing, students are encouraged to speak the language on a regular basis in order to feel comfortable interacting with heritage speakers.

### Writing and Literature

From initial short sentences to multi-paragraph essays, learners are expected to consistently write in their language of choice. This repeated practice assists students in better understanding the nuances of language syntax and grammar.

Students will read simple stories, poems and articles in the target language, preparing them to read more difficult literature as their language study continues.

### **Culture**

Key to understanding a language is knowledge of the culture in which it is used. Presentation of holidays, peoples, history, geography, food and music are some avenues through which culture is taught.



## **Physical Education, Fitness & Health**

### **Philosophy**

Middle School physical education, fitness and health classes play a critical role in educating the whole student both physically and cognitively. The purpose of our physical education, fitness and health program is to instill in students, at an early age, the value of self-preservation and choosing a lifestyle that is good for both the mind and body.

Students have opportunities to develop motor skills and fitness, and to gain an understanding of the importance of physical activity. Classes challenge students to advance knowledge, and to promote the confidence, skills and motivation needed to engage in a lifelong, healthy, active lifestyle.

### **Content**

Three-part program includes: general sports-related skills and activities with the P.E. teachers; specific fitness education component with our exercise science specialist; and formal health education during physical education class time. Football and track/cross-country sport teams practice after school.

### **Sixth Grade**

Students are challenged to advance knowledge, confidence, fitness skills and the motivation needed to engage in a lifelong, healthy, active lifestyle.

### **Seventh Grade**

Students engage in general sports-related fitness skills and a formal health education rotation that encourages responsible personal and social behavior.

### **Eighth Grade**

Students develop skills in fitness, movement, and strategy in an advanced program in sports and health education. Health education connects choices to a healthy lifestyle.

## **Fine Arts**

### **Philosophy**

A Park Tudor education includes instruction in the fine arts because we believe an educated person should understand and appreciate the arts. We teach with a logical sequence for success; we allow children to take risks, learn self-discipline, and a respect for other abilities; we help them to create and discover their talent. We also provide opportunities to express their talents. We emphasize that the participation in and the understanding of fine arts can become a lifelong pursuit.

### **Content**

#### **Sixth Grade**

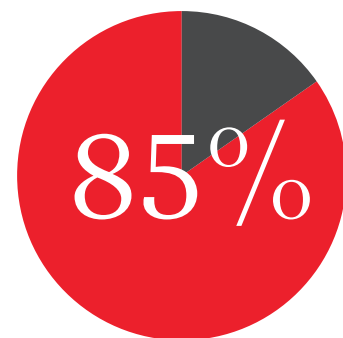
Vocal music, instrumental music, art and drama are required components of the curriculum. Dance experiences are incorporated into the physical education program for all students.

#### **Seventh and Eighth Grades**

Students may choose among the following classes: Technical Theater, Advanced Technical Theater, Band, Orchestra, Beginning Visual Art (Art I), Advanced Visual Art (Art II), Choir (Vocal Music), Acting and Directing and Advanced Acting and Directing.



of students participate in fine arts



of students take part in after-school athletics open to all

The image shows the exterior of the Park Tudor building, featuring a stone facade and a prominent red-tinted section. A large, semi-transparent red rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text. The building has a grey shingled roof and a stone wall. A set of concrete steps with a black metal railing leads up to the entrance. In the foreground, there are green bushes and a stone retaining wall.

# PARK TUDOR

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