



# PROGRAM OF STUDY

Middle School | 2020-21





## OUR MISSION

The New Community School empowers bright, talented students who are challenged by dyslexia and related learning differences. The innovative and research-based college preparatory curriculum uses a customized educational approach to build skills in language and math to foster academic and personal strengths - igniting the passions and gifts of unique minds.

## OUR VISION

The New Community School launches students with the knowledge, skills, and resilience to pursue their passions, navigate the opportunities and challenges of their world, and live their lives with courage, compassion, and purpose.

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# CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The students who come to The New Community School enter with specific language skill deficits. These deficits impact their ability to acquire knowledge and their ability to demonstrate what they know. Standardized testing often reveals deficits in reading, spelling, and math computation skills. Deficits in written expression, organizational skills, and study skills are more difficult to quantify, but are no less crucial for academic success at the secondary level. All the academic departments have built-in structures and strategies that are designed not only to help our students compensate for their skill deficits, but to help them develop reliable and effective organizational and study techniques. As students develop the skills needed to succeed in future educational settings, supports and structures are gradually adjusted and students are expected to exercise greater independence.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Middle School experience is designed to present curriculum that is relevant and challenging in an environment that cultivates individual skill development and self-advocacy. A primary academic focus in the Middle School is the remediation of reading, handwriting, spelling, composition, math, and study skills. These skills are pivotal for success in academic settings. A typical middle school student's schedule includes daily classes in English, math, history, science, physical education/health, an elective, and Language Fundamentals. Class placement in math and Language Fundamentals is based upon diagnostic skill testing. All middle school electives are quarterly. Electives for students in grades 5 and 6 are 45-minutes in length while electives for students in grades 7 and 8 are 70-minutes in length.

## ADVISORY

The purpose of advisory at The New Community School is to create a climate that supports student achievement. Middle School Advisory focuses on building relationships and a sense of shared community while fostering engagement that leads to success. Advisory also supports academic monitoring and provides instruction in skills that promote learning.

## EXTRA HELP

A 30-minute study hall, known as Extra Help, is provided for all students each day. During the Extra Help period, students may see teachers for help, begin assignments, or complete tests.

All academic departments employ similar organizational structures and study skills strategies to help students develop the necessary skills to be successful in school. Teachers of all academic classes publish Week at a Glance updates found on Schoology so that students know what course assignments are upcoming and can plan their study time. Additionally, a system of color-coded binders and folders help students keep materials organized. Each subject's notebook has its own organizational system since the disciplines do not always lend themselves to identical organizational patterns.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER EXPLORATION

During the middle school years, it is important for students to develop career awareness, identify personal strengths, and begin to understand the connection between school and the world of work. The curriculum is designed to align with the school's mission of fostering academic and personal strengths with the goal of utilizing those strengths to confidently prepare for the planning and decision-making stage that occurs during the high school years.

During the spring semester, the college and career counselor delivers career exploration lessons in small groups that allow students to engage in critical thinking and meaningful interaction with peers. The content focuses on career vocabulary, understanding career clusters, workplace skills, and using developmentally appropriate career resources. Strategies for increasing students' self-knowledge include interest, skill, and personality inventories. These assessment tools help students understand and appreciate their strengths and interests. Being aware of personal strengths also contributes to a positive attitude and growth mindset as they relate to students' career development.

Career-based learning experiences, such as Innovation Week and career fairs, are built into the TNCS curriculum. These activities build awareness of what students need to learn in order to pursue certain careers. Additionally, these activities help bridge the connection between being a student and the world of work. As students progress through middle school, it is imperative that they understand the relationship between their current academic lives and their future career choices. This relationship is impactful regarding immediate decisions, such as high school course selection and long-term career planning.

## TECHNOLOGY VISION STATEMENT

Technology is a tool that provides added value to teaching and learning. Technology enriches the materials, methods, and assessments our teachers use to inspire young minds, making learning more interactive and engaging. Technology also allows for a more individualized educational experience for each learner. Middle School students learn how to use assistive technology both to access information and to demonstrate their understanding. Therefore, all middle school students are asked to bring an iPad (grades 5-7) or a Mac computer (grade 8) to school.

The New Community School supports the specific language-related learning differences of its students by selecting technological tools that help students communicate ideas and access materials. Technology levels the playing field in communication and helps students overcome the barriers they face in learning and content production. The New Community School provides direct instruction, when necessary, in these technologies and encourages students to see technology, including assistive technology, as a lifelong learning and communication tool.



## GRADES AND ASSESSMENT

The New Community School subscribes to a standards-based learning model. Under this model, a course grade reflects a student's mastery of the stated course objectives as measured on summative assessments. Rubrics or learning scales are utilized to communicate outcomes, guide instruction, and provide feedback. Learning scales demonstrate a continuum of learning. Reassessment at times is necessary, especially when student performance is below proficient or the teacher believes the original assessment did not accurately match what the student knows and can do. Students who wish to reassess are encouraged to work with their course teacher.

Student progress reports are issued four times a year, at the end of each quarter. Number grades are given for all courses in grades 5-8 except Language Fundamentals. However, students will receive letter grades for any high school level classes they take. Although assessment practices may differ slightly among departments and across grade levels, all teachers share certain beliefs. A brief description of grades as interpreted by our teachers is as follows:

- 4.0 = Excelling – demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications beyond what was taught in class
- 3.5 = Advance Proficient – applies the concepts, vocabulary and skills independently
- 3.0 = Proficient – demonstrates understanding of the concepts, vocabulary and skills consistently and independently
- 2.5 = Approaching Proficient – some minor inconsistencies and gaps exist
- 2.0 = Developing – demonstrates basic understanding, omissions, errors and misconceptions exist
- 1.5 = Emerging – ability to identify concepts and skills, needs support to make connections or to use skills
- 1.0 = Beginning – demonstrates limited understanding of the learning outcome, needs instructor assistance to complete work
- 0.5 = Minimal demonstrated progress on the learning outcome assessed

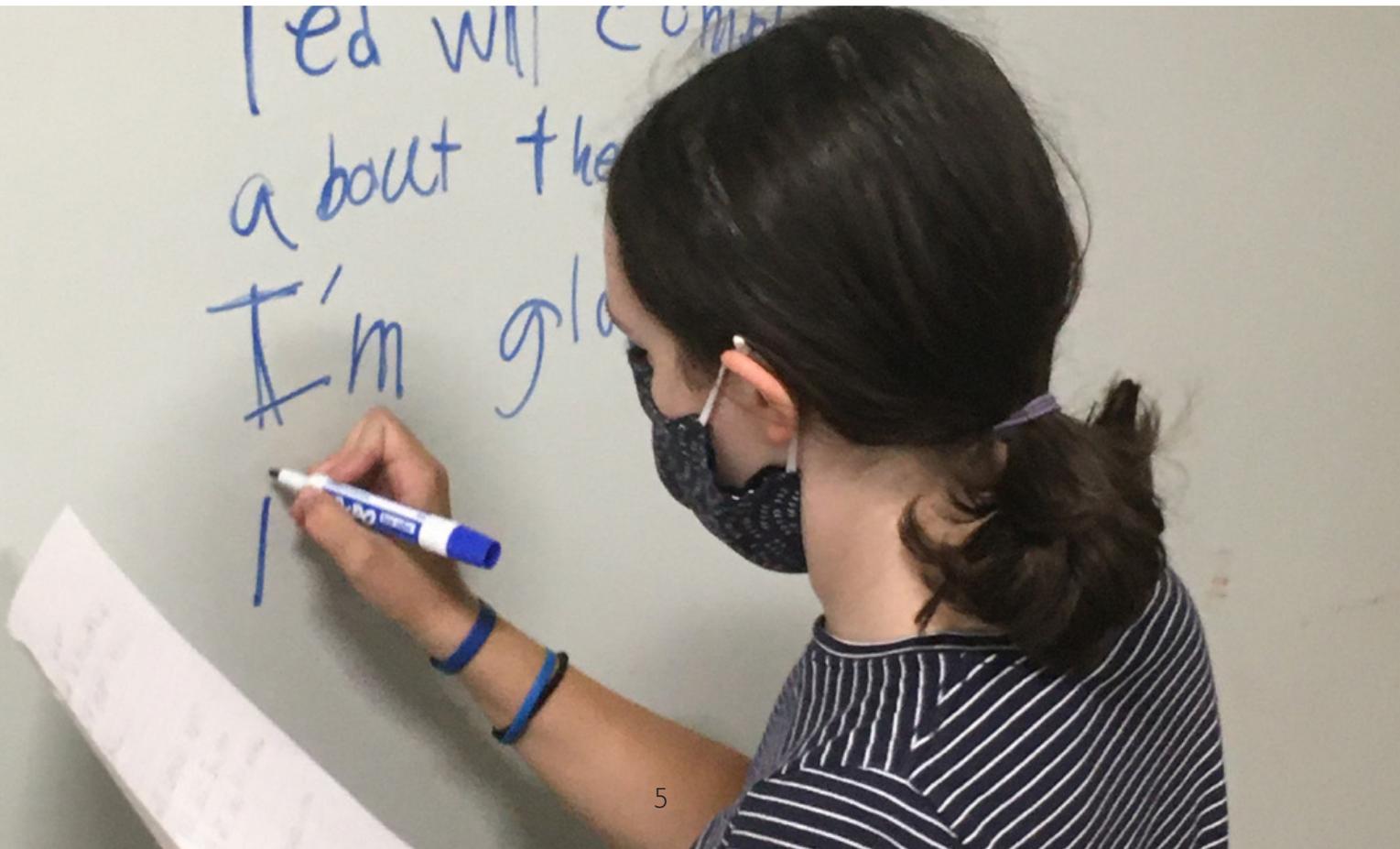
# LANGUAGE FUNDAMENTALS

Most students at the New Community School take a daily period of language remediation and instruction called Language Fundamentals (LF). The goal of this class is to improve each student's specific language-based learning skills. The LF teacher uses a diagnostic and prescriptive approach to guide instruction based on daily observation, as well as knowledge of the student's cognitive strengths and weaknesses. The program aims to develop a solid foundation in basic language skills upon which more advanced competencies in reading and writing are built. As students develop automaticity and fluency in accurate word recognition, spelling, and oral reading, their program increasingly emphasizes reading comprehension and written expression.

Basic language instruction is carefully sequenced and structured and emphasizes a multi-sensory approach to learning. It is based on phonetic principles with the aim of improving the student's reading and spelling accuracy through structural word analysis. Instruction encourages an analytical, problem-solving approach to reading and spelling difficulties rather than dependence on rote memory. Daily lessons include fluency-building drill and practice. Students are taught cursive handwriting as appropriate, with emphasis on legible form, accuracy, and stamina. Direct teaching of comprehension skills focuses on developing vocabulary, understanding sentence structure, recalling details, and recognizing and summarizing main ideas.

Instruction for advanced LF students provides opportunities to apply learned skills and interact with complex text and language, and the acquisition of new learning strategies. Comprehension strategies include distinguishing between direct and implied statements, making inferences, drawing logical conclusions, determining the author's tone and biases, and making evaluative judgments. Writing instruction aims to develop clarity, organization, voice, and persuasive effect in the student's written responses to reading. Techniques for proofreading written work are emphasized at all levels of instruction.

The goal of LF classes is to raise language skills to a level commensurate with the student's intellectual potential. Instruction begins at the level of the student's need and progresses as he or she demonstrates skill growth and competence. The pace of instruction is determined by informal observation and assessment as well as periodic normative testing. The LF teacher communicates the language goals in the Individual Instructional Plan to parents and provides quarterly updates of progress through written reports and/or conferences. In collaboration with academic teachers, the LF teacher supports the transfer of skills to the student's classwork, promoting academic competence and independence.



# ENGLISH

## HUMANITIES 5

The 5th grade Humanities course allows students to develop an understanding of the TNCS community, the history of Virginia from 1609 to the present, and how America developed as a country. Students will explore the geography of different regions and cultures, as well as learn applicable study skills needed to support their academic success in the upper grades. The Humanities class also focuses on daily practice of writing, which includes sentence structure, grammar, editing/revising, and paragraph organization. Through this cross-curricular approach, students will also be exposed to group work and hands-on projects which enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the content material.

## HUMANITIES 6

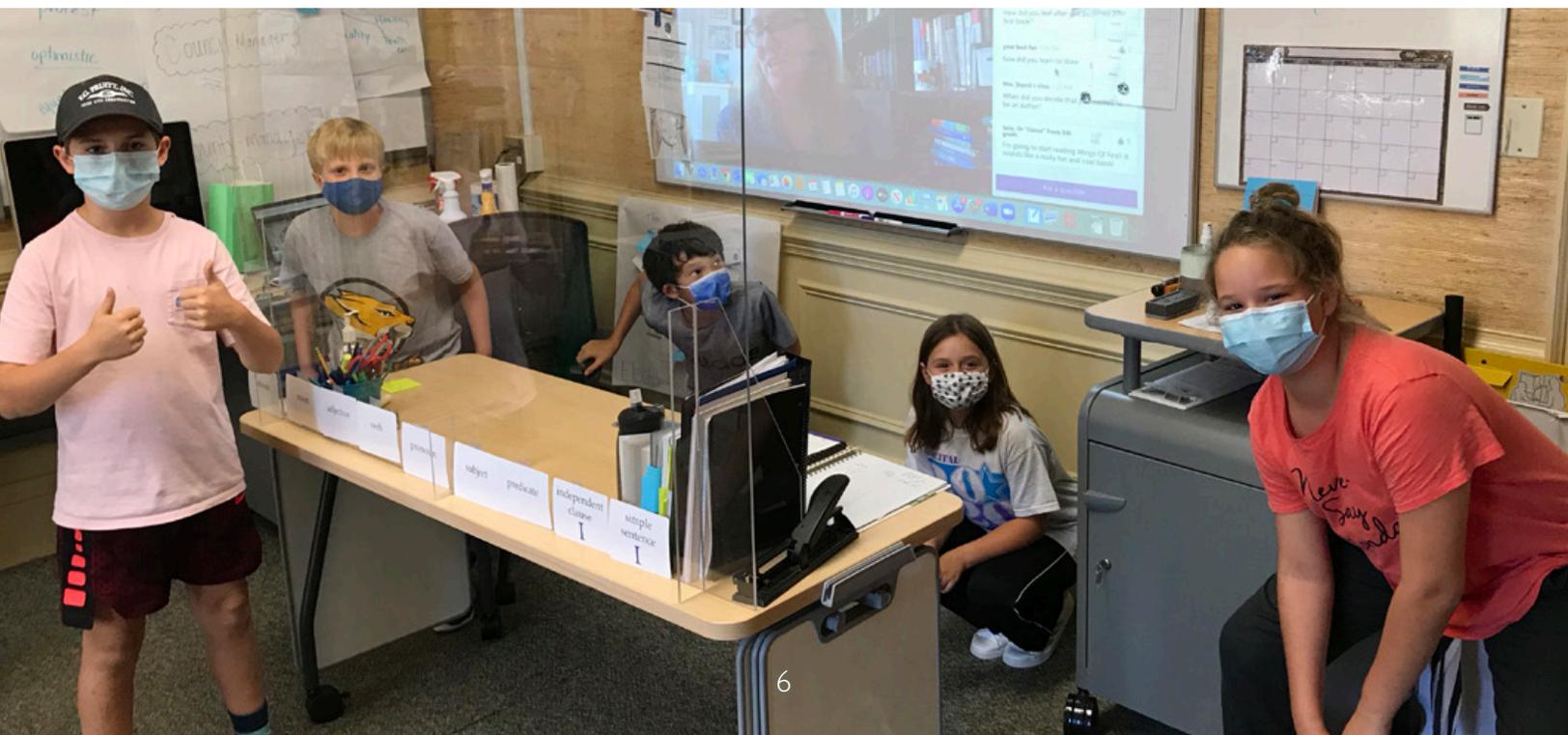
The 6th grade Humanities course focuses on giving our middle school students the strategies and skills needed to be successful life-long learners. Humanities 6 is an interdisciplinary course where the focus is to explore how reading, writing, and history blend together. This course provides students the opportunity to look at and analyze the human experience through the study of language, culture and ideas. Students will also focus on understanding nonfiction/fiction texts, creating various projects to enhance written expression, novel studies and writer's workshop. Through a cross-curricular approach that exposes students to hands-on learning projects as well as providing written support for historical research, students gain a deeper understanding of content material.

## ENGLISH 7

English 7 focuses on fundamental skills in composition and literary analysis. The literature studied includes: the novel, a variety of short stories, informational texts, and other selected genres of literature. In composition, students engage in multi-sensory instruction beginning with basic parts of speech combined with sentence building and generation techniques. Students will learn how to create simple, compound, and complex sentence structures. Then, students apply these basic structures to longer writing tasks and are introduced to writing the academic paragraph. They learn a multi-step writing process and use it repeatedly to develop their creative potential through varied writing experiences and cross-curricular activities and projects. Instructional strategies include structured notetaking, daily practice, and regular use of manipulatives to reinforce and review content. Small group discourse, role-playing, kinesthetic learning activities and audio-visual resources stimulate and enhance learning.

## ENGLISH 8

English 8 provides students with the opportunity to read literature, analyze the authors' methods and purposes for writing and communicate such analysis in a clear, understandable written format. Grammar skills will be strengthened and built on the foundations of previous knowledge. Students will also apply their reading and writing skills to cross-curriculum text/content tasks to learn and practice research and presentation skills.



# MATHEMATICS

## IMPACT MATH

IMPACT Math is an individualized student-centered program that allows students the chance to develop math confidence while progressing at their own pace. The underlying philosophy of this program is to help students develop success skills including Independence, Mindfulness, Problem solving, Adaptability, Communication, as well as Teamwork (IMPACT).

The IMPACT Math program is designed to begin with fraction operations and culminate with algebraic concepts such as slope and multi-step equations. IMPACT I aligns with traditional 5th and 6th grade material. IMPACT II aligns with traditional 7th grade material. IMPACT III aligns with traditional 8th grade material, as well as algebraic concepts.

Hands-on materials are required for every concept before students begin practicing on paper. They will have the opportunity to manipulate materials to better understand the concepts and then receive feedback from the teacher before moving on to the practice.

Assessments for IMPACT Math are required at the end of each concept. A student must take a summative assessment upon reaching the end of a unit in order to progress to the next unit. Students will also participate in project-based learning with their peers using an inquiry-based approach related to real life topics such as money, time, taxes, tips, and budgets.

The role of the teacher is an instructor, facilitator, tutor, guide, and cheerleader. While the students are moving through the program, the teachers are serving these multiple roles and are available for daily support and individualized instruction.

## ALGEBRA I

Algebra I is offered to students who have demonstrated computational and application skill levels sufficient for the study of Algebra. The primary focus in Algebra I is instruction on graphing linear equations and problem-solving techniques of various types of equations. Additional topics include operations with integers, systems of equations, operations with polynomials, and factoring. The students will discover how patterns and relationships are incorporated into the real number system. Throughout the year, problem solving skills are taught and practiced. Teaching techniques include warm-ups for computational practice, lecture and note-taking, manipulative and written practice of new topics, and one-to-one instruction when needed. Students are also introduced to the graphing calculator.

# HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

## WORLD HISTORY 7

The seventh grade world history course examines the rise of civilization in ancient China, Greece, and Rome and considers these issues: How do we learn about the past? How did early civilizations develop? What is a civilization? What causes civilizations to rise and fall? How are ideas transferred from one civilization to another? How can we compare civilizations that are different from one another? What impact does religion have on society? How can ancient civilizations still impact our lives today? In this class, students polish skills developed in earlier social studies classes. The course utilizes a variety of multi-sensory instructional techniques and a wide range of materials. Field trips and shorter research projects enhance the classroom experience.

## WORLD HISTORY 8

In eighth grade World History, students continue many of the themes from the seventh-grade course, as they learn about world civilizations from the fall of Rome through the Middle Ages in Europe, Asia, and Africa. They examine the impact of geography, resources, government, religion, and ideas on human societies. The students learn about Medieval Europe, the Byzantine Empire and the rise of Islam. They will conclude the course with an examination of Imperial China and Japan, and how these civilizations continue to impact our world today. The course utilizes a variety of multi-sensory instructional techniques and a wide range of materials.

# SCIENCE

## SCIENCE 5

Initially, elementary science students learn about properties and changes in matter. Students apply these concepts when they explore how the Earth's surface is ever-changing. Also, they will study Earth's systems and how matter cycles within Earth's systems. In addition, students will examine the relationships between the Earth, moon, and stars. Finally, students will make connections between matter and energy and they will explore how energy is transformed.

## EARTH & SPACE SCIENCE 6

Students begin their middle school science journey with the study of Earth Science. Building on fifth grade's foundational understanding of key concepts, students delve deeper as they continue to study matter and energy, planet Earth, structure and motion within our solar system, Earth's weather patterns and climate, dynamics and relationships of ecosystems, and human impact on our natural ecosystems. As part of our interdisciplinary approach, students will apply literacy and writing strategies as they practice the study and art of Science. Students will read nonfiction texts, as well as compare/contrast scientific principles within chosen novels. Also, students will learn how to effectively share their ideas and findings with others.

## LIFE SCIENCE 7

The Life Science course for seventh graders gives students opportunities to explore the living world through scientific investigation, observations, and inquiry. Students will explore basic biological topics including cell structure, cell processes, genetics, evolution, ecosystems, energy flow, biomes, and the human impact on ecosystems. By the end of their seventh grade year, students at The New Community School will have a deeper understanding of the relationship between living things, their environment, and the non-living things that affect them.

## PHYSICAL SCIENCE 8

The Physical Science course takes an in-depth study of physics and chemistry. This foundational course combines project-based learning, hands-on experimentation and activities, and skill development support to outfit students with the skills and knowledge they need for success in the upper grade sciences.



# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS 5/6

Health and Wellness 5/6 introduces students entering puberty to a purposeful and positive approach to their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Investigating the functions of skeletal, muscular, and digestive systems, we will learn how to care and create healthy habits for our physical growth. Students will transfer the way these body systems function to help us develop stronger social and emotional skills. We will investigate the 'bare bone' basics of decision making and taking. They will flex the muscles of interpersonal communication to build better relationships. Students will learn healthy ways to 'digest' their own feelings while also considering the feelings of others.

In an ever-changing world, topics covered in Health and Wellness 1 are flexible to address relevant needs, interests, concerns, and experiences of the individual, the school community, and the community at large. The heart of enhancing our student's health and wellness continues to be strengthening their ability to

- access and assess valid information;
- communicate effectively and appropriately; and
- evaluate, analyze, and apply knowledge for self-management.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS 7/8

Health and Wellness 7/8 continues to build on life-enhancing skills and behaviors covered in Health and Wellness 5/6. As puberty paves the way to adolescence, understanding how we develop physically, mentally, and emotionally helps to provide students with greater insight into how they behave, think, and learn. Students look at the journey of life from conception to death, focusing on reproduction and human development. Applying theories of developmental psychology, students gain perspective into how genetics, family, friends, and our environment influence who we are. Investigation of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems is both literal and metaphorical, as we explore matters of the heart, and learn how to "take a deep breath."



# ELECTIVES

The Practical and Fine Arts elective classes at The New Community School offer opportunities to learn new skills, develop artistic talent, or pursue a well-defined interest. Most often, these courses are heavily weighted with “hands-on” productive activities and emphasize both individual growth and positive group interactions. Each course has goals that address subject knowledge, social and recreational opportunities, community involvement, and leadership.

In addition, the Exploratory Rotation courses for grades five and six give students an opportunity to sample some of TNCS’s most popular electives by choosing three out of the five modules. In these 9-week versions of Art, Music, Drama Exploratory, Creative Writing-Artful Stories, and STEM, students will learn the fundamentals that will prepare them for a full-length version in the future.

## ART 5/6

In Art 5/6, students will develop visual communication skills. Students will begin to form an understanding of the essential elements of art and principles of design. Student will create artworks that are inspired by famous artists, art movements and other cultures of the world.

## ART 7/8

Art 7/8 focuses on developing creativity skills, self-expression, and confidence. Students will have the opportunity to explore a wide range of art mediums. Content focuses on building basic skills while also encouraging student’s personal expression. Art projects are inspired by other cultures, master artists and historical art periods. Students will use their artistic understanding to create works of art that represent their growing understanding of who they are.

## CREATIVE WRITING ARTFUL STORIES 5/6

The Creative Writing: “Artful Stories” course empowers students to practice their written expression, logic skills, problem solving abilities, and other creative paths that incorporate chronological art. Students will be taken on a journey to learn the history of graphic novels. From their history in the 1930s, to analyzing different graphic novels in class, students will create their own story. Each student will carefully pick what their novel will look like, including the characters and scenes, which creates great ideas and imagination.

## CREATIVE WRITING 7/8

Creative Writing gives students the opportunity to develop their own writing identities. Through a workshop setting, students will experiment with a variety of forms and creative strategies and communicate with peers to strengthen pieces. Workshops will be supplemented with discussion about writer’s craft in a variety of model texts. Students will leave the course with tactics to find inspiration for writing in the world, media, and imagination—and to continue to evolve as writers.

## MUSIC: TNCS LIGHT THE MUSIC 5/6

Music is a powerful force - it takes us places, connects us and makes us feel! Making music also provides many benefits - for instance, it activates our brains more than ANY other activity. By making it easy to create and share music, Light the Music opens the door to learning about and experiencing music - from ancient rhythms to today’s hits. Light the Music covers an overview of music history and theory with an emphasis on developing creativity, communication, and collaboration skills.

## INTRODUCTION TO GUITAR

Introduction to Guitar is a beginner’s course of fundamental guitar instruction. Students receive individual and group instruction in tuning, notes, scales, chords, tablature and strum charts, basic song structure, and small group performance. Students can progress at their own pace and are encouraged to focus on music and songs they find most appealing. The emphasis is on contemporary guitar music, not classical guitar nor standard notation. In addition, students have opportunities to try other instruments such as keyboard, percussion, banjo and bass guitar. Students with more extensive experience or skill can also take the course but will need to be more self-guided.

## **INTRODUCTION TO UKULELE**

Ukulele is a beginner's course of fundamental ukulele instruction for students with limited experience. The course is a hands-on class that allows each student to have daily access to a ukulele in good, playable condition. Students receive instruction in playing notes, scales, and chords and in reading music notes, tablature and strum charts. Each student will realize that they can be a ukulele player. Focus points will be strumming and rhythms, reading tablature and chord charts, improvising, and beginning songwriting. Students can progress at their own rates and focus on types of music that appeal to them. In addition, students will learn to play in groups. Students with more extensive experience or skill can also take the course but will need to be more self-guided and focused.

## **DRAMA EXPLORATORY 5/6**

In this class, students will get a small introduction into the basics of drama while also being able to express and challenge themselves through the art of theatre. Students will gain an understanding of theatre directions and characterization to help get them prepared for their final project. The final project goal is to showcase what students learned and how much they have grown through acting, song, and dance. This course will begin every day with a series of warmups for each student to connect with and get into their artistic beings. Throughout this course students will regularly self-evaluate and stretch their performance abilities to new norms. This class is for students who have never done theatre and for those who have done it before.

## **THEATER PERFORMANCE/TECH 7/8**

In this class, students will get a crash course in the basics of drama while also being able to express and challenge themselves through the art of theatre. Students will gain an understanding of theatre directions and characterization to help get them prepared for their final production. Students will learn about the different technical elements of theatre. Students will do hands on projects and activities centered around costuming, lighting, time management and picturization/set building. To tie everything together, students will learn fun theatre games, memorization techniques, show publicity, audition prep, and the art of selling yourself to theatre employers.

## **STAGE CONFIDENCE AND MOVEMENT 7/8**

In this class, students will gain a thorough understanding on the basics of Michael Chekhov techniques while also being able to express and challenge themselves through the art of theatre. Students will practice the importance of everyday stretching, characterization, and different movement techniques, which will prepare them for their final project. In this movement course, the class will start every day with a series of warmups for each student to connect with and get into their artistic beings. Throughout this course students play fun theatre games, regularly self-evaluate and stretch our performance abilities to new norms.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP 8**

This course provides an opportunity for 8th grade students to learn the entrepreneurial method and how to develop an innovative product. Students will reflect on academic and social skills needed as an entrepreneur. Also, students will learn how to work with a team in a respectful and effective manner.

## **STEAM**

The MS STEAM elective course provides students opportunities to develop skills in science, technology, engineering and math through applying the engineering design process to develop solutions to a series of challenges. Students work both individually and collaboratively to develop solutions to these challenges. Students first identify the important characteristics of the challenge to be overcome. They then research, ideate, implement, and test ideas to develop the best possible design for their solution. Artistry is woven through the design of each solution. The 5/6 STEAM elective is a quarter long course that is part of the exploratory rotation.

## **DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY 7/8**

In this hands-on course students will learn to operate a DSLR camera through participation in a variety of projects. Each unit project will incorporate a variety of composition and design elements that allow students to become familiar with camera features as well as what it takes to compose and set up a well-crafted photo. Students utilize a variety of editing tools to enhance and refine their photographs. Students will reflect upon their learning and share photographic works in a digital format.