



Middle School Curriculum Guide 2011.2012

Open Window School
6128 168th Pl SE Bellevue, WA 98006

www.ows.org
www.vistaacademy.org

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VISTA IS THE MIDDLE SCHOOL DIVISION (GRADES 5 – 8) OF OPEN WINDOW SCHOOL (OWS).

THIS CURRICULUM GUIDE HIGHLIGHTS THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM.

DUE TO THE NATURE OF OUR DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM, THE DESCRIPTIONS FOR EACH SUBJECT SHOULD BE VIEWED AS THE BASELINE OF WHAT WILL BE COVERED. THE ACCELERATED NATURE OF OUR PROGRAM AND BELIEF IN RAISING THE CURRICULAR FLOOR AND ELIMINATING THE CEILING MEANS THAT OUR CURRICULUM IS EVER CHANGING TO BEST MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS.

OVERVIEW

The Middle School curriculum reflects our commitment to serving gifted adolescents. Open Window School’s philosophy is reflected in the 5-8 curriculum and is applied in classes that accommodate different learning styles. The base curriculum is generally at least one year above grade level, with differentiation for students who require additional support or greater challenge.

Our goal is to develop confident, original thinkers who demonstrate understanding by applying and using skills in relevant ways. A variety of instructional approaches and experiences allow for active learning. We promote independence, positive socialization, and exploration, as well as a sense of personal pride and accountability.

Middle School teachers are responsible for developing and modifying the curriculum to match the changing needs and interests of the students. There exists a range of skill levels within each class. Teachers implement the curriculum in a nurturing environment designed to allow for challenge and risk-taking at all levels.

RAISING FLOORS, ELIMINATING CEILINGS

Grades 5-8 core curriculum takes a rigorous and innovative approach to mathematics, language arts, science, social studies and Spanish. The development of yearly themes shape and focus our program, providing students with a cohesive and relevant middle school experience.

The Middle School academic program is strong in all areas, where students are given unique opportunities to dig deeper and explore further. In addition to the core curriculum, we offer technology, physical education, the arts, and leadership opportunities both on and off campus, allowing students to work with other

professionals in relevant settings. Middle School students are guided as they develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to participate responsibly in an increasingly interrelated world. They benefit from project-based learning and cross-disciplinary activities, promoting skill application, collaboration, and decision-making.

Our students are deep thinkers and motivated learners, and they set high standards for themselves. Vista, the OWS Middle School division, fosters scholarship and citizenship, preparing its graduates for success in high school and beyond.

GRADE LEVEL THEMES

Curricular disciplines are frequently integrated and often taught via a common theme. Integrating instruction across the disciplines attaches relevance to students' learning, encourages associative thinking, solidifies concepts, and can provide a springboard to higher-level applications. We have developed themes at each grade level. They are as follows:

- **FIFTH GRADE - *PREPARATION***
- **SIXTH GRADE – *ADAPTATION***
- **SEVENTH GRADE – *NAVIGATION***
- **EIGHTH GRADE – *RESPONSIBILITY***

CORE SUBJECTS - OVERVIEW

MATH

The differentiated nature of our math program is one of the hallmarks of the Middle School experience. Small groups and mixed grade level instruction allow us to best meet the needs of our students. This approach is in alignment with best practices for gifted students, and we have enjoyed a successful track record throughout the middle school years of preparing students for advanced mathematics in high school and beyond.

As students move through the Middle School program, their mathematics experience will focus on connecting work with numbers and operations to more symbolic work with equations and expressions. Regardless of the mathematical concept, Vista students are counting, visualizing, comparing, estimating, measuring, modeling, reasoning, connecting, representing, using tools, and becoming mathematicians. We strive to produce independent thinkers who can analyze problems, select appropriate tools to solve them, and achieve conceptual understanding of the mathematics behind the algorithms through a real-world context.

This preparation puts our graduates on track for high school Advanced Placement (AP) courses like Calculus and Statistics, as well as International Baccalaureate (IB) course work.

SCIENCE

Our inquiry-based approach to science reflects the diverse ways scientists study the natural world and propose explanations based on the evidence derived from their work. Research confirms that students learn best in an environment where they can make discoveries and actively construct their own understanding of science concepts.

Middle School students participate in frequent science labs, engaging in inquiry-based experiences that include both “hands-on” and “minds-on” activities. They develop knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, as well as a comprehension of how scientists study the natural world. Our students learn best in an environment in which they can make discoveries and actively construct their own understanding of new science concepts.

Our science program allows students to enhance their content knowledge through authentic inquiry and, from this experience, better help them design and develop their own scientific investigations. Students are able to critically analyze the data they gather, and engage in thoughtful scientific discourse around the data and their interpretation. They benefit from a variety of off-campus experiences and on-campus residencies, interacting with scientists and researchers in a range of fields.

OWS graduates will enter high school well prepared for honors Biology and Chemistry, paving the way for Advanced Placement coursework in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

HUMANITIES

The Middle School humanities program integrates direct instruction in reading, writing, and communication with social studies and history. Our program develops the advanced skills in academic literacy necessary for success in high school. We understand that middle school students are establishing ideas about their learning that will be with them for the rest of their lives. They are seeking both concrete and abstract experiences. Students benefit from hands-on activities, group projects, inquiry processes and dynamic ways of learning. Humanities classes build a bridge between the big ideas of society and the critical thinking fitting today’s multi-cultural world.

LANGUAGE ARTS - READING, WRITING AND COMMUNICATION

Throughout the Middle School experience, students continue to develop the advanced skills of fluent readers. Literature circles, book groups and whole class discussions of novels support topics being explored in other disciplines. They are aware of the author's craft and of their responsibility as readers. Using evidence from the text, students discuss, reflect and respond to a wide variety of literary genres and informational text. Oral and written responses require students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information from multiple sources to deepen understanding of the content.

Students experience extensive instruction and practice in various forms of writing (expository, persuasive, essays, poems, short stories, reports, research papers, etc.) and language mechanics as they apply the 6 Traits of effective writing. Building vocabulary, critical listening, and editing skills are integral parts of the program. Students have opportunities to publish and present their work and participate in authentic writing experiences.

Speaking and listening skills are taught across the curriculum through the presentation of projects, working with experts in the community, and a range of off-campus experiences and on-campus residencies.

Upon completion of the Middle School language arts program, students will be ready for advanced high school coursework, including honors and Advanced Placement Literature and Composition, as well as AP English.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Our social studies program features short simulations, interactive classroom activities, visual discoveries, global studies, current event discussions, and experiential exercises. Historical conversations and dialogue often center on primary sources and documents as students learn to think, question, and analyze like historians.

Students at this age are developmentally ready to dramatically deepen their understanding of the world and its peoples. They are equipped to sharpen their skills of description and analysis, comprehend the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a culturally diverse democracy, and contribute to the common good. Throughout the curriculum, a study of global problems and sustainability helps students understand the complexity of issues like population, poverty, consumption, and the environment.

Students leave eighth grade well prepared for opportunities to take Advanced Placement courses in World History, U.S. History, and American and Comparative Government.

SPANISH

Building on the scope and sequence of our elementary Spanish program, Middle School students continue to develop their conversational skills, with a special emphasis on communication, vocabulary acquisition, and grammatical structure. Students gain increased proficiency in Spanish writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

Videos, language software, and a variety of hands-on projects increase exposure to the culture and lifestyles of different Spanish speaking countries. The program emphasizes Five C's of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

Open Window School graduates should be able to enter high school taking Level 2 Spanish at minimum, with opportunities to gain greater proficiency through more advanced coursework.

BEYOND THE CORE SUBJECTS

In addition to the core academic areas of math, science, language arts, social studies, and Spanish, the Middle School Division is pleased to offer the following:

TECHNOLOGY

Each Vista student receives a laptop for their use at school. The laptops facilitate the learning process and serve as an important tool for organization, research, and communication. In addition to incorporating technology into the curriculum, students receive at least 100 minutes of technology instruction each week in the new advanced technology lab.

We strive to instill in students the responsibility of understanding how technology works, including its alternatives, benefits, and risks. These important lessons are developed as students accept the responsibility of new technologies around them.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education offers skill development that can be applied to both individual and team sports. Students become physically educated as they develop leadership, cooperation, teamwork, honesty, and self-control. Students are introduced to basic fitness components like muscular strength and cardiovascular endurance. They participate in a variety of sports, competitive and non-competitive games, and recreational activities. PE is held twice a week for 50 minutes each session.

HEALTH/LIFE SKILLS

Our health program emphasizes skills for life and healthy choices. The program addresses such issues as physical development, promotion of sexual health, prevention of disease, interpersonal relationships, body image, and gender roles. Other topics include drug and alcohol education, nutrition, and positive peer relationships.

Life Skills emphasizes the importance of organization, time management, conflict resolution, goal setting, study skills, and test-taking skills. Health classes are taught by an experienced health teacher, and typically take place during the second semester.

LIBRARY/INFORMATION LITERACY

At the middle school level, the library serves as an important resource for students both during and after the school day. Referred to as the library learning commons, the library schedule and the Middle School schedule allow for flexibility in terms of students' visits to the library and the librarian's visits to middle school classrooms. The library learning commons is also open to students each day after school until 4:00.

ART

The Middle School provides students with a meaningful experience in the visual arts by creating a supportive environment that celebrates creative exploration and individuality. The program takes a discipline-based art education approach to its curriculum, which combines experiences from four disciplines in the study of art: Art History, Art Criticism, Aesthetics and Art Production.

Each lesson allows the students to discover new mediums and techniques, in addition to developing and refining their fine motor skills. The goal is to incorporate a diverse body of art projects for every grade, opening the door for our students to investigate the broad range of visual arts. Every year the students explore making abstract and realistic art through drawing, collage, painting, sculpture, ceramics and printmaking.

Students participate in art class once a week for a semester.

DRAMA

In drama classes, students will further develop their critical thinking skills. Students will make connections between theatrical knowledge and prior knowledge, building on their innate curiosity and purposefulness. Cooperative learning and problem solving are central elements of the drama curriculum. Mastering these skills will help students in all other academic and social areas. The study of drama

also provides a structure for the development of creative thinking and a place to showcase the creative ideas of the students.

The drama curriculum is process centered. These are “doing” classes. The students will be involved mentally, emotionally, physically and socially. They will be using a variety of classic drama and improvisation games combined with acting exercises, study of theatrical knowledge and independent/group project work.

Students participate in drama class once a week for a semester.

ADVISORY PROGRAM

Advisory groups, led by a faculty member, meet twice a week to discuss issues pertinent to middle school students. The program fosters student-teacher relationships and provides a healthy social exchange and peer recognition in a safe and trusting environment. Topics range from reviewing organizational strategies and personal goal setting to addressing self-esteem, empathy, and conflict resolution issues.

The program recognizes the natural process of adolescent growth and development, and strives to meet a need for relationships and guidance. Involvement with a caring, supportive adult advisor and interaction with a small number of peers provides the basis for a deeper relationship, the learning and practice of social/emotional skills, and the processing of the middle school experience.

SERVICE LEARNING

Active participation in organized service is an important component of the Middle School experience. Students foster civic responsibility while serving the needs of our school and community. Recent service learning opportunities included local park restoration and water quality testing. We enjoy a strong partnership with Mountains to Sound Greenway and participate in two service days during the school-year. Vista students also have opportunities to engage in service learning outside of school through Orion Center and the Positive Impact Project.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Vista experience extends far beyond the physical boundaries of the campus. Off campus partnerships take students to unique destinations like research labs, sound recording studios and soup kitchens, helping our students make important connections between investigations at school and their real world applications.

HALLMARK EVENTS

In addition to extensive partnership offerings, each grade level participates in an extended overnight trip, focusing on environmental education and stewardship. The eighth grade international experience also includes a home-stay and service component.

- 5th grade – 5 day trip to North Cascades Institute
- 6th grade – 5 day trip to Olympic Park Institute
- 7th grade – 5 day trip sailing in the San Juan Islands
- 8th grade – 10 day trip to Costa Rica

Grades 5-8 Curriculum Overview	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade	Seventh Grade	Eighth Grade
MATH* <i>For math, students are placed in mixed grade-level groups, therefore grade levels have not been assigned</i>	<p style="text-align: center;">At the middle school level, students are placed in mixed grade-level groups. <i>Prentice Hall – Course 1, Course 2, Course 3, Pre-Algebra, Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2</i> <i>The Art of Problem Solving: Trigonometry and Pre-Calculus Materials</i></p>			
LANGUAGE ARTS (Includes reading, writing, and communication)	Literature Studies <i>Junior Great Books</i> Vocabulary 6+1 Trait Writing/Writer's Workshop Form & Genre Writing Research Skills Grammar & Usage	Literature Studies <i>Junior Great Books</i> Vocabulary 6+1 Trait Writing/Writer's Workshop Form & Genre Writing Research Skills Grammar & Usage	Literature Studies <i>Junior Great Books</i> Vocabulary 6+1 Trait Writing/Writer's Workshop Form & Genre Writing Research Skills Grammar & Usage	Literature Studies <i>Junior Great Books</i> Vocabulary 6+1 Trait Writing/Writer's Workshop Form & Genre Writing Research Skills Grammar & Usage
SCIENCE	Solar Energy Populations and Ecosystems Environmental Detectives Levers and Pulleys Mysterious Machines Hallmark overnight experience – North Cascades Institute	Catastrophic Events Earth Science Force and Motion Terminal Velocity Hallmark overnight experience – Olympic Park Institute	<i>Brain Rules</i> Gravity and Newton's Laws Solar system and the lives of stars Matter, energy, atoms, and bonding Biochemistry Chemical, physical, and biological oceanography Hallmark overnight experience – Salish Sea Expeditions	Living Things, Cell Processes, and Energy Anatomy and Physiology Genetics Electricity and Magnetism Hallmark overnight experience – Costa Rica
SOCIAL STUDIES GLOBAL STUDIES	<i>United States History</i> United States Colonization & Settlement (1600-1740) American Revolution (1754 – 1787) U.S. Constitution	<i>History Alive - The Ancient World</i>	<i>History Alive – The Medieval World</i> <i>Washington State History and Geography</i>	<i>History Alive- The United States through Industrialism</i> <i>United States History, Government, and Civics</i>
SPANISH	Pre-Foundations iExpresate! Series Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities	Foundations iExpresate! Series Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities	Intermediate/Advanced iExpresate! Series Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities	Advanced/Advanced 2 iExpresate! Series Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities

Comment [TC1]: I could provide sample novels if you'd like

Comment [TC2]: Also could supply specifics here

Comment [TC3]: Could list topics under these, but it would be long

Grades 5-8 Curriculum Overview	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade	Seventh Grade	Eighth Grade
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	Fitness circuits, running, floor hockey, yoga, bowling, soccer, badminton, pickleball, developing student created games.	Fitness circuits, running, Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Volleyball, "Personal Best" cards. floor hockey, yoga, bowling, soccer, badminton, pickleball, developing student created games.	Fitness circuits, running, Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Volleyball, "Personal Best" cards. floor hockey, yoga, bowling, soccer, badminton, pickleball, developing student created games.	Fitness circuits, running, Ultimate Frisbee, Basketball, Volleyball, "Personal Best" cards. floor hockey, yoga, bowling, soccer, badminton, pickleball, developing student created games. Ancestry PE projects
TECHNOLOGY	Intro to Programming & Robotics Design algorithms and create programming solutions to a variety of computational problems using Scratch Explore how to integrate hardware and software in order to solve problems Introduction to Mindstorms NXT, including RoboTic-Tac-Toe, dancing robot and rescue robot challenges	Visual Design Develop communication skills in print production and graphic design, using Adobe tools Graphic design, photography, print and layout design, and production Introduction to Photoshop Collages and photography Digital self portraits Graphic design for the web	Video Design and Production Engage in skills to learn storytelling, capturing and editing video and audio, and finalizing content for a DVD, web, or digital videotape Camera angles/movement Creating public service announcements Voiceover narration Scripts/storyboarding Editing and post-production File Management/importing media Structuring and sequencing media Outputting footage in various formats	Foundations of Web Design Web development Learn to plan and code web pages using a variety of techniques. Basic HTML Image editing for the web Basic CSS Separating style from structure Hyperlinking Introduction to Javascript Introduction to Flash
SOCIAL - EMOTIONAL SKILLS All K-4 grades have Middle School "Buddies" as partners	<i>Responsive Classroom</i> <i>Positive Discipline</i> <i>Second Step</i> <i>Customized Advisory Program</i> FLASH: Family Life & Student Health – A Component of Overall Health Program	<i>Responsive Classroom</i> <i>Positive Discipline</i> <i>Second Step</i> <i>Customized Advisory Program</i> FLASH: Family Life & Student Health – A Component of Overall Health Program	<i>Responsive Classroom</i> <i>Positive Discipline</i> <i>Second Step</i> <i>Customized Advisory Program</i> FLASH: Family Life & Student Health – A Component of Overall Health Program	<i>Responsive Classroom</i> <i>Positive Discipline</i> <i>Second Step</i> <i>Customized Advisory Program</i> FLASH: Family Life & Student Health – A Component of Overall Health Program
SPECIALIST CLASSES Drama Art Library	Drama (50 min/semester) Art (50 min/semester) Library Learning Commons (designated open library times through school-day and each day after school)	Drama (50 min/semester) Art (50 min/semester) Library Learning Commons (designated open library times through school-day and each day after school)	Drama (50 min/semester) Art (50 min/semester) Library Learning Commons (designated open library times through school-day and each day after school)	Drama (50 min/semester) Art (50 min/semester) Library Learning Commons (designated open library times through school-day and each day after school)

