



## VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS SCHOOL

*Knowledge. Character. Community.*

# MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

## English

Middle School English is a year-long required class for all students. This course focuses on reading comprehension and fluency, public speaking, study skills, spelling, writing, and grammar and mechanics.

In the area of writing, students will learn the elements of stories, elements of plot, types of conflict in literature, summarizing, and story revision. Students will respond to biographical writing prompts and also practice historical fiction writing.

Student reading, writing, and speaking are strengthened through formal study of standard grammar and mechanics and vocabulary lists. Students accomplish this in the context of thematic units which rotate on a three-year basis. Examples of these units are:

### *Southeast Asia*

Southeast Asia is a region of the world that is rich in history and steeped in cultural traditions. This unit will explore the folktales and legends rooted in Eastern philosophy and religion. The novel "Children of the River" describes the cultural differences that Cambodians bring to the United States and the adjustments they must make to be accepted by their American peers. Students will also learn the style of the Eastern poetry, reflecting an appreciation of nature, beauty, and simplicity through its form and minimal use of words.

### *Inventors and Inventions*

In this quarter long core unit, students explore the world of inventions and inventors, with literary emphasis on science fiction and fantasy work. Students will research and present their findings to the class about important inventions through history, women inventors, accidental inventions, and children inventors.

### *Middle Ages*

In this quarter long core unit, students explore what life was like in medieval society under the rigid structure of feudalism. Students will step back into a time of clergy, nobility, knights, serfs, and peasants to examine the inequalities of these relationships. Literature selected will reflect the actions, rights, responsibilities, and restrictions of people living during this time. Students will also compare their lives with the lives of people living during the Middle Ages.

## *Water*

In this quarter long core unit, students explore how water plays a role in the balance between man and nature. The ever-present need for water is basic to all civilizations past, present, and future. As residents of the Tidewater area, it is impossible to ignore the effect of water on our daily lives. Rivers, bays, lakes, oceans, and streams provide recreation, food, and transportation. Several novels selected provide a backdrop to issues facing us in caring for our natural resources.

## **Quaker Studies**

### *Quaker Studies I*

In this course, students will study history, major players, major movements, and core values of Quakerism, i.e. SPICES. Students will study Mindfulness practices as an experiential example of Quaker Silence practice.

Students approach learning in the Quaker Studies course with more of an academic approach and less of a “story” approach as done in Lower School. Middle School Quaker Studies has more self-reflection and exploration and the use of journals to help work with the expression of ideas. The Middle School Quaker Studies course has two parts. In Year I students complete Mindfulness Lessons 1-5. In Year II Mindfulness Lessons 1-5 are reviewed; Lessons 6-9 go into more depth and students complete the quarter with a Quaker project. They begin their design of the project at week 5. Projects are displayed.

### *Quaker Studies II*

Students study history, major players, major movements, and core values of Quakerism, i.e. SPICES. Students continue to deepen their Mindfulness practices as an experiential example of Quaker Silence practice.

The first year of Middle School Quaker Studies served as an introduction becoming acquainted with the tools and principles of Quakerism and Mindfulness. The second year is more in-depth with discussions that allow for exploration of different ideas as well as debate. Students use Mindful Awareness to look at their own ideas and as well as an exploration of whether Mindfulness or Quaker Studies can be used when viewing contemporary topics of social and cultural issues.

## **Performing Arts**

The Music and Performing Arts program offers students opportunities for self-expression in the disciplines of instrumental and vocal music, theater, dance, visual, technical and cultural arts. The primary purpose of the arts program is to recognize and nurture the creative self within each by expanding their horizons with the world community. We use the arts as teaching tools to foster our Quaker values of harmony, equality, simplicity, integrity, peace, and community. Together, independent growth and collaborative achievements produce student art that is shared with the larger community.

## Health and Physical Fitness

### *Nutrition*

Students will learn how to track and analyze their nutritional choices by listing the essential nutrients and describe the function they perform in the body.

### *Physical Fitness*

By the end of Grade 8, the learner will apply tactics and strategies to modified gameplay; demonstrate fundamental movement skills in a variety of contexts; design and implement a health-enhancing fitness program; participate in self-selected physical activity; cooperate with an encourage classmates; accept individual differences and demonstrate inclusive behaviors; and engage in physical activity for enjoyment and self-expression.

## Mathematics

### *Middle School Math I*

Middle School Math is the entry-level math for Middle School that builds on the basic mathematical skills involving whole numbers, fractions, and percentages. The emphasis is on numerical reasoning. Vocabulary and problem-solving are integrated throughout each section. Middle School Math I provides a preparation for success in Pre-Algebra and Algebra.

### *Pre-Algebra*

Pre-Algebra is a prerequisite course for Algebra I. This course help students transition from arithmetic to the fundamental algebraic concepts. Students gain proficiency in solving equations, are expected to think logically, use both deductive and inductive reasoning, use mathematical models, understand mathematical principles, strengthen their test-taking skills, and translate their learning to real-life situations.

### *Algebra I*

This course is designed to emphasize the study of multiple representations of linear and nonlinear functions. It includes mathematical concepts for working with rational numbers, various expressions, analyzing and solving linear equations & inequalities, data analysis, probability, statistics, and polynomials. Students will use hands-on materials and calculators to solve problems where the algebra concepts are applied.

## Organization, Research and Study Skills Electives

### *Organization, Study and Literacy Skills*

Students beginning Middle School will reinforce organization, study and literacy skills which will serve as a foundation for success as they progress in academia, with the emphasis on the individual nature of how students apply these skills. This is a 1 quarter MS elective.

### *Organization, Literacy and Research Skills*

Students in the second year of Middle School will reinforce organization, study and literacy skills to include core skills in reference resources, search strategies and research organization with special attention paid to internet safety, appropriate internet behavior and decision making. This is a 1 quarter MS elective.

### *Organization and Research Skills*

Students in the third year of Middle School will reinforce organization, study, and literacy skills to include core skills in reference resources, search strategies and research organization with an emphasis on discussion, collaboration, and exploration of strategies. This is a 1 quarter MS elective.

### *Language Arts Plus*

Students are given the opportunity to gain extra practice and enhance their skills in reading comprehension, reading fluency and vocabulary.

### *Writing Plus*

Students are given the opportunity to practice and enhance their skills in a variety of formats, using standard grammar and mechanics.

### *Logic and Reasoning*

Quantitative reasoning and general math skills are strengthened through logic and reasoning puzzles, games and other activities in this elective.

## **Science**

### *Earth Science*

The sixth-grade science course provides students with an understanding of the general concepts of earth science. It is a full year course in which students study the structure and composition of the earth including the earth's atmosphere, oceans, surface waters, landmasses, and interior. Students investigate the dynamics of the earth's changing surface and the role that energy plays in earth systems. Students learn how the earth's ecological systems support life through environmental relationships and natural cycles. Students develop an understanding of ecological resources and wildlife conservation. Students relate the flow of matter and energy within an ecosystem. Through "hands-on" investigation, students learn to conduct scientific investigations, think scientifically, and use scientific tools and technologies. Students learn to communicate scientific information and processes and understand how developments in science and technology affect society and the environment.

### *Life Science*

The seventh-grade science course provides students with a general understanding of the concepts of life science. Students investigate the structure, function, and processes of living things. Students learn how cells divide, grow and convert matter and energy to sustain life.

They learn how organisms reproduce and pass hereditary characteristics from one generation to the next. Students investigate similarities and differences in living organisms, and how living things have changed over time. Students learn about the human body systems and factors that are responsible for maintaining human health. Students learn to conduct scientific investigations, think scientifically, and use scientific tools and technologies. Students learn to communicate scientific information and processes and understand how developments in science and technology affect society and the environment.

### *Physical Science*

The eighth-grade science course provides students with a general understanding of the concepts of physical science. Students study the principles of matter and energy, mechanics, and motion. Students relate these principles to the study of astronomy as they investigate the Earth's position and movement in the solar system and its relationship to other planetary and stellar bodies. Through "hands-on" investigation, students learn to conduct scientific investigations, think scientifically, and use scientific tools and technologies. Students learn to communicate scientific information and processes and understand how developments in science and technology affect society and the environment.

### *Green Engineering*

Green engineering is the design of processes and products that in some way minimize pollution, promote sustainability and protect human health without sacrificing economic viability or efficiency. Today's engineering challenge is not only learning how to become more environmentally sound but also how to deal effectively with the serious and urgent consequences of non-sustainable design that are now starting to appear in our communities. Spiking energy prices, floods, droughts, heat waves, water scarcity, and warming temperatures are all a few examples of the trends and events that are forcing substantial changes to the practices of engineering. The new vocabulary in engineering design includes robustness, resilience, and adaptability. Green design is no longer viewed as an add-on to the design process. Instead, sustainable green engineering design is viewed as a new normal regarding engineering processes. As such, this course will act as an introduction to engineering fundamentals as well as environmental and sustainable design. Students will learn green engineering basics and theories in class discussion and apply this knowledge to their own designs that serve the greater good of Virginia Beach Friends School and its greater communities.

Fundamental concepts: engineering, design, sustainability, environmentalism, stewardship

### *Astronomy Basics*

This basic course looks at Astronomy asking, "what's out there?" It starts with observations as we stand on Earth looking up at the Celestial Sphere, then moving to the discoveries of our expeditions throughout the Solar System, and finally what we know of the Universe. This is a note-taking class, filled with details.

## **Social Studies**

### *Grade 6 Social Studies*

This year will focus on the early beginnings of the United States through the Civil War, with the student expanding on his or her earlier studies of Virginia and American History through in-depth study of the political, economic, social, and cultural development of the nation. The course places special emphasis on study skills, locating and using varied sources of information, communicating ideas effectively, working cooperatively with others, and planning and using time efficiently. Thinking skills are developed as students examine historical issues and events to determine the contrasts between eras, evaluate information, identify points of view and recognize bias. Fundamental concepts in civics, economics, and geography are developed within the context of United States history.

### *Grade 7 Social Studies*

Social Studies 7 expands the study of American History begun in grade 6 by introducing students to nineteenth and twentieth-century American history. The course concentrates on the social, economic, and political history of the United States and examines the effects of developments, events, and change on the lives of people in historical periods.

Fundamental concepts in civics, economics, and geography are further developed within the context of United States history. The course places special emphasis on study skills, locating and using varied sources of information, communicating ideas effectively, working cooperatively with others, and planning and using time efficiently. Thinking skills are developed as students examine historical issues and events to determine contrasts between eras, evaluate information from varied sources, and identify points of view and bias. Students are encouraged to investigate personalities and topics of personal interest by reading.

### *Grade 8 Social Studies*

Social Studies 8 examines the U.S. and Virginia constitutions and provides the basis for the study of governments at the national, state, and local levels. The role and responsibilities of informed citizens in the democratic decision-making processes are emphasized. The development of skills essential to academic success and effective citizenship is the focus of the course. Basic economic, political, and geographic concepts and vocabulary are developed through the study of the operation of the American political and economic systems. The activity-based program encourages students to explore current topics and issues and to use their knowledge, ideas, and creativity to communicate in a variety of visual, written, and oral forms.

## **Spanish**

### *Introduction to Spanish*

Students in Introduction to Spanish will explore the language, customs, and culture of the Spanish speaking world while developing speaking, reading, writing and listening skills.

### *Intermediate Spanish*

Students in Intermediate Spanish continue to explore the language, customs, and culture of the Spanish speaking world while building on the concepts covered in the Introduction to Spanish course. Students will expand their understanding of the language by deepening their vocabulary and grammar skills.

## **Technology**

### *Writing with Technology*

In this quarter-long class, Middle School students will explore basic computer vocabulary, internet safety, and a variety of computer programs and applications as they relate to enhancing student creative, informational, technical, and persuasive writing.

Writing for Inventors and Inventions Unit--Creative Writing: Sci-Fi Short Story and Persuasive Essay: Pro-Technology is a positive influence in the 21st Century. ConTechnology is a Negative Influence in the 21st Century.