

# Academic Program

*The adolescent must adjust to new intellectual abilities. The general program of studies must...supply that which we consider to be the creative elements necessary for the physical being of [humans] in general and must put the adolescent into relation with present civilization by bringing him general culture and by experience.*

The Junior High curriculum is configured in a three-year cycle in which students work together in mixed-age classes. The Odyssey trip sets the stage for the formation of the community and also sets the academic tone for the first semester of the year. The Odyssey West, to Crow Canyon Archaeology Center in Southwestern Colorado, focuses on early humans in North America, geology and Native American literature. The Odyssey East, to Williamsburg and Washington D.C., focuses on the creation of our nation, Colonial America and early American literature, essays, and political thought. The Odyssey South, to the Gulf Coast Research Center, focuses on marine biology, civil rights, the Civil War, and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century American Literature.

The description below gives a general idea of the specific areas that might be covered in a given year. In most instances, the work of the students is focused on their own research and projects. Each year some projects are integrated across disciplines, and so the list below is intended to give a simple impression of the content, but does not necessarily describe the depth or the scope of the experience of most students.



**Core Subjects:** The core subjects are Humanities (English and Social Studies), Mathematics and Science.

**Humanities:** Humanities is an exploration of the Human Story through integrated studies. The themes of each year flow from the Odyssey. Through the themes students practice skills such as discussing, questioning, analyzing, researching, note-taking, outlining and many forms of writing. Literature studied reflects the different themes. Students complete projects that are formal research papers, oral and slideshow presentations, visual timelines, and other creative types of presentations. Through our lessons, activities and the students' sharing their work, we try to keep the human story alive in our classes. We launch each year with an introduction to philosophical dialogue using Montclair University's Philosophy for Children curriculum.

**Year 1: (2011-2012)** Starting with the Odyssey West, we study archaeology, Native American cultures, Ancient civilizations and the beginnings of literature through oral histories and story telling. Second

semester we study Asia, its geography, literature, people and religions. We end the school year with an emphasis on Europe and the creation of democracy, putting on a Medieval/Renaissance Fair for all the students in the school.

**Year 2: (2012-2013)** Following the Odyssey East to Williamsburg and Washington D.C., the focus is on the creation of the nation, Civics and Government, from colonies to country, using early American literature and primary sources. Second semester we study the geography, literature and people of North and South America. We end with a study of Minnesota and economics, which culminates in the students creating a business and selling their wares at *Marketplace*.

**Year 3: (2013-2014)** Starting on Odyssey South, we immerse ourselves in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American history and stories, including the Civil War and Civil Rights. For the second half of the year we study the people, literature and geography of Africa. We end the year studying contemporary social issues, as well as utopian and dystopian novels.

Students participate in an integrated Humanities class and also go more in-depth with individual English and Social studies classes.

***Humanities/English*** includes creative and expository writing, literature, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and public speaking. Students gain fluency in written expression through writing frequently in a variety of forms, including letters, journals, essays, poems, research reports, speeches, and visual presentations. The focus is on the writing process from start to finish: telling ideas orally, brainstorming, journaling, writing drafts, revising, editing, proofreading, and receiving peer and adult feedback. A deeper understanding of poetry as craft is built through guided reading and writing. Students often read aloud, present their final work to peers, and publish in class anthologies.

Students also read a variety of literature throughout the year that is connected to the Humanities topics. They begin to learn to include analysis of themes and symbols, backing up statements with evidence from the text. They engage in discussions and small-group activities to help them understand and gain pleasure from their reading.

***Humanities/Social Studies*** includes history, anthropology, geography, current events, and economics. Through lessons and activities we unveil the human story and share in the telling and analyzing through student projects and in-class seminars. Students read from historic texts, primary sources and current events magazines and discuss these in seminar format. Students are encouraged to ask questions, to create questions to guide our discussions and to answer questions as well.

**Mathematics:** The Junior High math program aims to both ignite inspiration and develop the formative skills that students need for success in mathematics. Our weekly schedule allows for all students to attend a formal *Math Skills* and *Math Connections* class as they develop fluency in Pre-Algebra, Algebra and

Geometry. In addition individual, small or large group lessons along with guided practice occur within our Studio work periods that meet twice a week. All students are also given weekly formal assessments and are expected to complete at least one math assignment each school day. Lastly, students who demonstrate readiness are invited to attend a Geometry Seminar during Studio work periods.

*Math Skills* meets the developmental needs of each individual student wherever they may be. Math Skills is a mixed age and ability environment where students practice the nuts and bolts of mathematical manipulation from an objectives-based standpoint according to their specific needs and work towards individual mastery of grade level Minnesota State Standards and beyond. Math Skills makes use of a variety of resources including several textbooks, algebraic manipulatives, practice puzzles, software tools, web based applications and more. In addition to mastering objectives individually, students are expected to be open resources for each other and participate frequently in peer teaching.

*Math Connections* is a cooperative environment that emphasizes active learning, data collection, group processing, social skills development, positive interdependence and connections to other disciplines. The spirit of the class is to get students to look beyond the book to see that math is alive, well, relevant and possible.

Although distinct classes, the formative nature of the work of *Math Skills* supports the inspirational experience of *Math Connections* and the two function in tandem to support Lake Country adolescents in the development of their mathematical minds.

**Science:** The science program incorporates lessons, labs, projects and field studies into a hands-on, experiential format. The program includes threads of phenology, bird study, bee keeping, citizen science and the scientific method in addition to the scientific disciplines studied in the themes of the three-year cycle. The study of science also includes field work at our rural campus.

**Year 1:** Emphasis on Geology; Astronomy; Ecology and Environmental Science; Cells and Life Processes; Field Ecology and the Scientific Method.

**Year 2:** Emphasis on Weather, Climate and Phenology; Genetics, Heredity and Evolution; Forces, Motion and Energy; Chemistry; Field Ecology and the Scientific Method.

**Year 3:** Emphasis on Marine Biology; the Six Kingdoms of Life; Magnetism and Electricity; Waves, Light and Sound; Human Physiology; Field Ecology and the Scientific Method.

**Art:** Junior High students build on their Elementary II art experience in a year-long course and further develop their understanding of the elements and principles of design, composition, and visual language through their work with a variety of mediums and working methods and the study of both contemporary

and historical works of art and culture. It is important for the adolescent to have an authentic connection to the work they create in order to develop their sense of self and identity and further develop their skills in visual problem solving, self expression and realize an appreciation for the world around them. In addition, students design and construct the sets, props and costumes for the Junior High play during Interim.

**French:** At the Junior High level, the students begin a formal study of French grammar, covering the equivalent of a first year high school curriculum over the course of three years. They work from a high school level French book, *Bon Voyage*, published by Glencoe Publishing Company. There are weekly spelling and grammar quizzes and students complete homework assigned after every class, normally due the following class period. Daily lesson work is incorporated into projects throughout the year which can include fashion runway presentations, a substantial composition in French based on a French film, visual displays of French speaking countries, skits, publicity brochures, and an oral presentation before judges at the spring *A Vous La Parole* state French competition. In addition, each student has *Déjeuner Français* (a small number of students sharing lunch together) twice a month during which they speak only in French about events in their lives.

**Health and Sex Education:** Health is presented throughout the year, both in formal health classes and integrated into science and humanities. Sex education classes for 7<sup>th</sup> graders include anatomy and physiology, for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, sexual identity, contraceptives, and sexually transmitted diseases. Mental health topics include depression, anxiety, self-harm, and grief and loss. Other topics included in this course are healthy living, nutrition, making good personal choices, drugs, alcohol and tobacco as well as different learning styles (which is co-taught with our learning specialist).

**Latin (spring):** The Latin class is a nine-week course in both the Latin language and culture. Students study Roman history from the founding of Rome to the Second Punic War. They also have an intensive grammar and vocabulary experience, do short readings from classical writers (in Latin to English), and translate from *The Cambridge Latin Series*, Book 1. Students also study Roman history from Hannibal to Caesar. They review and deepen their familiarity with grammar and vocabulary, do other short readings and translate from *The Oxford Latin Series*, Book 1.

**Music and Drama** are performance based. Students continue the ensemble work begun in Elementary II with a connection to their humanities study. Improvisation and scene study are explored in conjunction with the Interim play. During interim, students perform Shakespeare and classical musicals on a rotating schedule. An all-year elective choir is also offered.



**Physical Education** offers team and individual sports along with a unit in social dance. An aerobic and fitness component is a part of every class. Students continue to develop as leaders and peer teachers by running class warm-ups, arranging teams for play, and coaching in areas of expertise. In a two-year cycle, the following will be presented:

**Fall:** Team building, soccer, speedball, lacrosse, flag football, racquetball and ultimate Frisbee.

**Winter:** Social dance, basketball, team handball, volleyball and floor hockey.

**Spring:** Self defense, badminton, archery and softball.

**Woodworking** offers an introduction to hand tools and the process of choosing, designing, and completing a project in wood. All students take at least 12 weeks of woodworking, and can choose woodworking as an elective for an additional 6 weeks.

**Land School:** Junior High students engage the Land School in two primary ways, Farm Stays and Land School visits.

***Farm Stays:*** Students can choose one 18-day Farm stay each school year, living in community with their peers in a microcosm of a wider society. The Farm Stay experience also gives the students time and space to experience the rhythms of the land and to become deeply connected to their work there. The Farm Stay includes two unique courses, occupations and micro-economy. The occupations class is an interdisciplinary course in which students focus on topics such as organic gardening, food preservation, animal care and maple sugaring. The micro-economy course immerses students in production and exchange - students create products and sell them at Land School events that they organize and host.

***Land School Visits:*** In addition to the primary connection by way of the Farm Stay experience, the entire Junior High visits the Land School four times each year. During the day-long visits students engage in stewardship of the land. Stewardship may include trail and bird feeder maintenance, supporting maple sugaring, development of various areas of the Land School, planting trees to prevent erosion and animal husbandry. Our last visit in the spring is a 2-day overnight with extended stewardship projects.