
Upper Grades Handbook

Birchtree Charter School

2022-2023



Why an Upper Grades Handbook?

Throughout their time in the upper grades (6th–8th), students go through a transformational process that is characterized by increasing independence and responsibility. They are being prepared for a demanding high school experience in a manner that will help them not just “survive”, but thrive. Children of this stage are no longer satisfied with goodness, beauty and truth as handed to them by an adult, but rather ready to explore their relationship to the world and to high ideals. They desire knowledge of the world and connections to our present time as well as what has happened in the past.

Here at Birchtree, our students are exposed to more subjects as their world expands. Their relationships with their teachers, both class and special subject teachers, continues to grow, but also changes in nature. As we guide children towards a higher level of academic rigor, more homework will be expected, and students will be required to manage their time independently.

Upper grade teachers are committed to academic excellence. The students will be evaluated through essays, artwork, class participation, timeliness, quizzes and tests. Meeting deadlines will be a part of their academic evaluation.

In order to meet these social and academic goals, we are providing additional information for parents of upper grade students. If you have any questions, please speak to your child’s teacher.

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Student Conduct Policy

Student Code of Conduct

We are all part of one human family. We will treat each other as we wish to be treated – with kindness, honesty, and respect. We will listen when others ask us to stop a behavior which is perceived as disrespectful or unkind, and we will strive to find a courageous voice in ourselves to perceive and speak the truth when we witness such behavior in others. We will honor and uphold the dignity of each member of our human family with noble work and right action.

Standards of Conduct – General Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Honor and uphold the Student Code of Conduct
- Be on time, and in the classroom on time, for every lesson
- Help keep the classroom and school grounds clean and tidy
- Treat all property (not only personal property) with care
- Remain in class under the teacher’s supervision unless the teacher has given permission to leave
- Turn in all required assignments on time
- Practice their stringed instruments daily and bring instruments to every orchestra class
- Perform class work to the best of one’s ability
- Keep all schoolbooks/chrome books in good order and in good condition
- Do not bring gum and candy to school
- Follow the Dress Code
- Leave disruptive or dangerous items at home
- Treat others as they would like to be treated (bullying/harassment will not be tolerated)

In the Upper Grades, the supervising teacher/staff member may document the incident on a Behavior Citation form for parents to sign and return to the class teacher. After three violations within any quarter of the school year, more serious consequences may be necessary which include, but are not limited to, parent/teacher/student conference, community service, restorative justice sessions, suspension, academic probation, or expulsion.

Bullying/Harassment

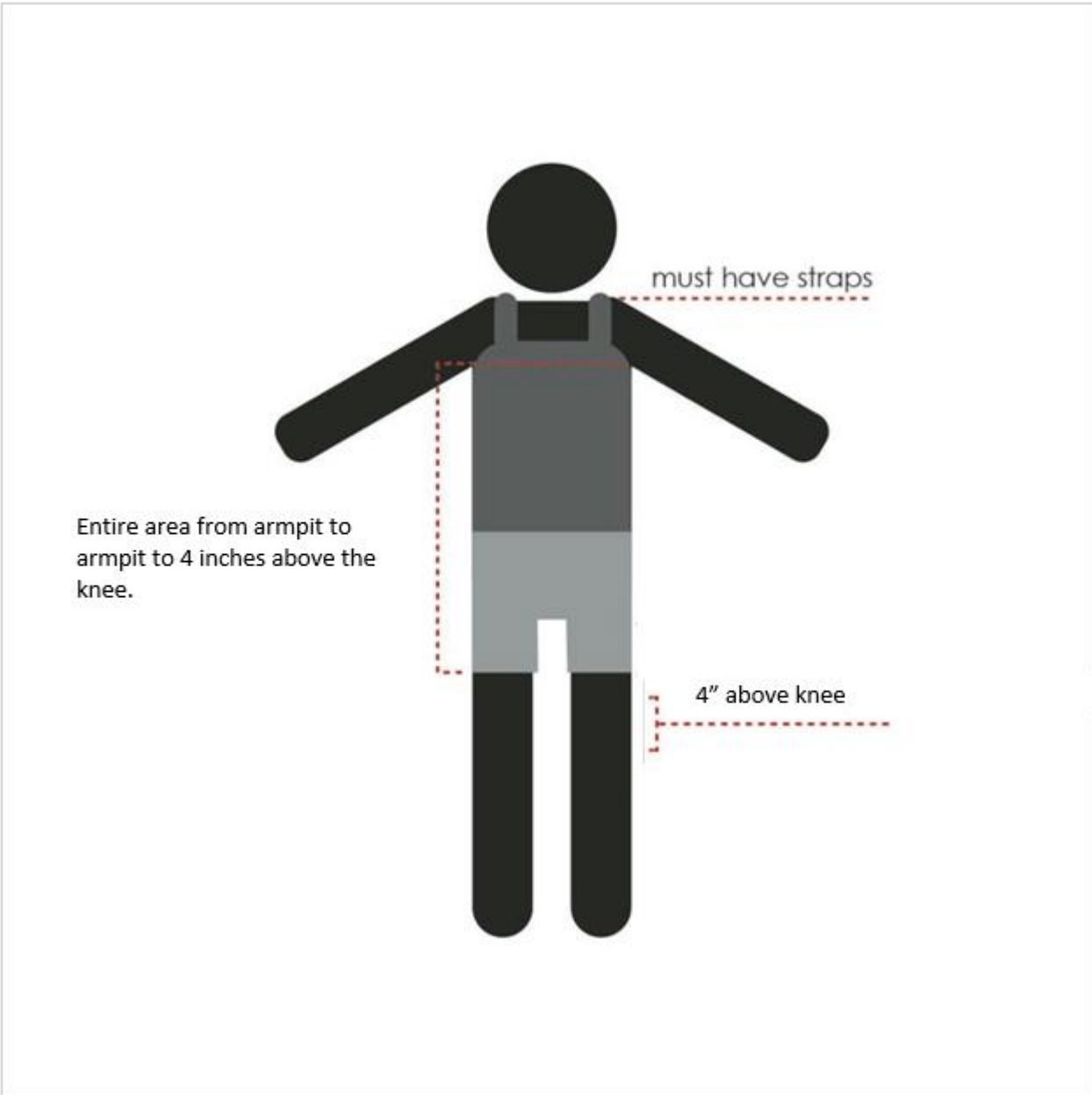
“Harassment, bullying, and discrimination are prohibited. Abusive language, sexual harassment, cyber-bullying, inappropriate physical contact, racial or ethnic slurs, hazing, and other similar provocative actions are included in these categories of prohibited conduct. Harassment is behavior which is intended to trouble or annoy someone. It is the exertion of power by one person over another; it may be based on misunderstanding or a deliberate act and often contains a subjective perspective. Discrimination and harassment may be based on culture, ability, physical appearance, size, sexuality, or religion, among other things. Bullying is defined as an aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Harassment, bullying, and discrimination can take many forms such as hitting, tripping, kicking, punching, unwanted touching, name-calling, swearing, threatening, spreading rumors, ignoring, staring, gesturing, “standing over,” preventing someone from joining in an activity, hiding, sending mean notes or emails, or damaging someone else’s property.” (Mat-Su School District Student Handbook)

Dress Code Policy

Student dress and general appearance is a shared responsibility among students, parents, and the school. The Board of Education requires students to attend school in appropriate dress that meets health and safety standards and does not interfere with the learning process. Additionally, a Waldorf education deliberately attempts to avoid the distractions of blatant branding and media influence. The following minimum standards will be enforced.

- a. In the spirit of Waldorf-inspired education, we do not allow clothing with media references or large logos or images. This expectation applies to all other parts of our dress code policy that follows. To reduce classroom distractions, we respectfully ask that students refrain from wearing clothing with media images such as large commercial logos or cartoon characters. Alternatives to the above would be clothing comprised of solid colors, stripes, polka dots, or patterns. Outerwear with small brand logos are acceptable.
- b. Prohibited clothing includes revealing clothing that is transparent, extremely low cut, blatantly shows visible undergarments, attire with holes above mid-thigh, shirts or tops that do not cover the waist band of pants, leggings, shorts, or skirts (e.g. no portion of the midriff is to be visible).
- c. Spaghetti straps, strapless tops, muscle shirts, off-shoulder shirts are not allowed.
- d. Leggings, athletic tights, yoga pants, are allowed but they may not be transparent.
- e. Dresses, skirts, and shorts must cover the mid-thigh when the student is sitting down.
- f. Clothing and accessories (e.g. notebooks, patches, tattoos, and jewelry) must not display racial or ethnic slurs or symbols, gang affiliations, vulgar, subversive, sexually suggestive or otherwise in appropriate language or images; promotion of products that students may not legally buy such as alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, and illegal drugs; or anything that promotes harm to another or one's self.
- g. Prohibited items include sunglasses and hats indoors (unless medically required), sleepwear or anything resembling sleepwear.
- h. Markings or drawings on the skin are prohibited. This includes writing on the skin with permanent or semi-permanent ink.
- i. To protect those students and adults in the school with sensitivities and/or allergies, please be mindful and use discretion when applying perfumes, aftershaves, deodorants, and other products that contain fragrances. Students need to be mindful of personal hygiene and take the necessary steps of personal grooming.

Any exception to the dress code for special reasons (Upper grades socials, spirit days, class reward, etc.) must be approved by school administration. If a student chooses to wear inappropriate clothing, the student will be asked to meet the dress code. If necessary, the student may call a parent to bring in an appropriate change of clothes. If a student continually violates the school dress code, they will be subject to disciplinary action. The following diagram can help illustrate minimum clothing coverage requirements for all students.



Hallway Expectations

It is very important that students be able to meet the expectations for hallway behavior because other classes may be testing or doing work that requires a quiet environment. Older students are also in a leadership position. They are setting the standard for younger children.

- Conversation in the hallway should never be above a level 1 (whisper).
- Students are to travel quickly (without running) and quietly to class.
- When lining up outside a classroom, conversation is never to be above a whisper. Students are to wait calmly in line for the teacher to invite them into the room.
- Unless given specific permission, movement in the hallway is confined to walking. Sometimes a teacher will give permission for jumping rope or another activity, but the student must have permission for these activities.
- Student study areas are quiet areas. They are for quiet reading or work, not for socializing, unless a teacher has given permission otherwise.
- Students will only use the stairwell designated by their class teacher for traveling between classes. Students will use the handrail only as a handrail. Sliding down the handrail is dangerous and marks our walls (vandalism).
- The elevator will only be used when absolutely necessary – recycling, helping move large items, injury – and only with permission.
- The elevator hallway in the basement is strictly off limits to students unless there is a medical reason to be using the elevator. The stairway that leads to that hallway is not to be used for any reason.
- Remember that artwork is to be treated always with reverence. We enjoy it through our eyes, but not through touching it.

Recess Expectations

- When dismissed, students are to walk to the blacktop or the playscape.
- Students must stay out of the halls, out from behind the buildings and out of the woods during recess unless they have a written pass from their teacher.
- No students are allowed in the classrooms without adult supervision.
- No snowballs
- No sliding on big hill into fences, sliding is allowed on boulder scramble only
- Forts are allowed to be built, but cannot be destroyed, and no one may stand on them. We will take forts down on Thursdays, so they may begin again the following week. Forts can't touch the fence.
- No picking other students up off the ground.
- No food on playground
- Tag is allowed, but no grabbing around another student's body, no tackling, and no shoving them
- No stealing items from other students (hats, gloves, shoes, etc.)
- No climbing the fence, or trees
- No leaving playground without adult supervision. If another student is seen outside the fence, tell an adult
- No fighting (wrestling, rough tag, pushing, etc.)
- No destroying other's creations, such as snow men
- No stick fighting
- No standing on swings
- No sledding on boards or shovels

- Shovels need to stay on blacktop
- No middle-school students are allowed in tunnels, tires, or other hidden locations without permission
- No playing in line. Students are allowed to talk at a level one voice until teachers come pick them up.
- Please close gate behind you if you are the last one through.
- Be responsible for all gear, yours & the schools. If you bring something out from class or the shed, please bring it back.
- All coats must stay on under 40 degrees F
- Recess is over when the whistles are blown. All play comes to a stop, please get in line immediately. If you take your coat/gloves/hat off during recess, please leave it by the fence so that you can retrieve it easily.
- Vegetables, fruits, flowers, sticks, and critters should be left in nature unless an adult gives you permission to remove them.

Electronics

It is common in the upper grades for students to have a cell phone and, sometimes, other electronic devices. If there is a true necessity for your child to have an electronic device, please follow these guidelines:

- Cell phones are to be turned off (not silenced) during the entirety of the school day, including pick-up time. They are to be either checked in with the teacher or kept in the student's backpack.
- If you need to contact your child for any reason, please do so through the school office. This includes directions for pick-up, family emergencies, etc. The school office number is 907-745-1831. The office staff will get a message to your child or will transfer the call to the classroom when necessary.
- Kindles and other e-reading devices will be allowed only at the teacher's discretion. These are to be used solely for reading grade appropriate material, not for looking at pictures, playing games, etc.
- Inappropriate use of electronic devices will result in the device being confiscated and sent to a school administrator until the parent/guardian comes into the office to pick it up.
- **Visitors to the classrooms are expected to follow these same expectations.**

Toys and Games

If a student has obtained permission from their classroom teacher, he/she may bring in a developmentally appropriate toy or game to school. All items should be clearly labeled with the child's name and they must be willing to share. Students and parents assume the risk that the object may be lost or broken. If the item is used in a manner that distracts from instruction, the teacher will take the item and hold it until the end of the day when it will be taken home and not brought back to school.

Responsibility for School Property

Students are responsible for taking care of and maintaining school property. Daily and weekly chores are required of every student.

- Group classroom supplies are meant for community use. Therefore, they are not to be taken home or kept in individual cubbies without teacher permission. They need to be available for the next student to use.
- Cubbies are to be kept neat and orderly at all times.
- Students are responsible for picking up trash and sweeping and vacuuming debris from the floor even if they are not responsible for it being there. Encouraging each other to be neat when working and eating minimizes work later.
- Our building and furniture is meant to last for many generations of Birchtree students. Marking furniture or walls, using furniture inappropriately, or in any way damaging school property is vandalism. Restoration will be required by the student.
- When outside, students are to behave responsibly towards our environment as well as making sure that they are not damaging our beautiful campus in any manner. Breaking branches off the trees or hitting the trees with large items that can cause damage is not demonstrating respect to our environment. This also includes gathering from the garden or orchard without permission.
- Students should not be in any area of the property without specific permission from a school official. This includes going into the woods.

Media

- Please, see the school's general media policy.
- Conversation about media should be avoided. This includes television shows, movies, and video games. Some music may also not be age appropriate. Please, remember that younger children attend Birchtree. Songs with adult content or about adult issues should not be discussed at school.
- Please, keep all books and magazines that are not age appropriate at home.

Upper Grades Policies and Procedures

Community Service

Waldorf education's social curriculum includes community service. Each grade in a Waldorf school undertakes a developmentally appropriate task to contribute to the community, both inside and outside of the school. Community service makes learning meaningful, broadens students' awareness of the world around them, and weaves a social network that creates relationships. We expect all our students to take part in school and community service, with the upper grades fulfilling minimum expectations as follows:

6th Grade: 10 hours

7th Grade: 15 hours

8th Grade: 20 hours

These hours can be accrued both individually and as a group. For grades 6-8, service completed outside of school must be recorded on the Birchtree Service Log and submitted to the class teacher. For school service, students can track hours via the school's volunteer computer.

For students to take part in large events, such as the Birchtree Trip, they will need to account for having fulfilled the minimum expected service hours. As a general rule, acceptable service would be any activity which is done without payment; goes beyond established, family-related responsibilities; and provides a benefit to others.

Examples of community service include:

- Clean-up efforts (raking, shoveling snow, recycling, litter pick-up)
- Volunteerism (animal shelter, senior center, recycling center, food bank)
- Child, elderly, or animal care (babysitting, visiting an elder, pet walking)
- Manual labor (set up or take down for concerts, plays, school fairs, socials)
- Social agency contributions (organizing food, clothing, or personal care drives)
- Outdoor work (trail maintenance, farm work, mucking out livestock stalls)

There are many other ideas that can count. If in doubt, ask the teacher beforehand for approval.

Recycling – The seventh grade class traditionally is responsible for collecting the recycling from each classroom once a week. The seventh grade teachers will assign this responsibility and train their students to complete the task.

Class Performances

Plays - Each year, Birchtree students produce a class play. In the Upper Grades, the teacher still acts as director of the play, although there will be increasing complexity of music, costumes, choreography, etc. Students may also be responsible for creating scenery and costumes and providing props. Upper grade teachers may decide to combine classes for larger productions.

Concerts- There are at least two orchestra concerts each year. While these concerts may fall outside of the regular school day, students are expected to participate in the scheduled concert. If students are unable to attend for any reason, they are expected to do a make-up performance to demonstrate their long practiced skills.

Visiting the Classroom

Times to visit the classroom will be determined by individual teachers. **Please, do not bring younger siblings to classrooms in the Upper Grades as this is often a distraction from instruction and/or classroom expectations.** (Birthday celebrations may be the exception for visits from younger siblings.)

The Birchtree Trip

At the end of the eighth grade, Birchtree students take a weeklong class trip to Washington, D.C. For most students, the Birchtree trip is the culmination of an 8-9 year journey from Kindergarten through 8th grade. Many educational connections are made from their many years of learning together as they visit historical and educational sites. Additionally, it marks the conclusion of their eighth grade educational experience; focused largely on American history, which allows students to truly experience the sites where events studied have occurred and gain a deeper appreciation of the American historical and political heritage. The trip is also a time when the class as a whole experiences going away together and increasing both their sense of independence and social cohesion in the group. This experience also allows the eighth graders to spend time with the group of friends that will be going in different directions at the end of their Birchtree experience.

It is expected that all Birchtree eighth graders attend the trip. We will work as a community to ensure that the financial cost is never a factor in a student attending. However, there may be instances in which student behavior is a factor in whether a student attends.

Fundraising and Accounts for the Eighth Grade Trip

Each class – 6th, 7th, and 8th - will have one class-wide fundraiser, except 7th grade which will have two fundraisers. It will be the teacher's responsibility that every student contributes in some way to the fundraiser. All proceeds from the class-wide fundraiser will be divided equally between all the students in that class and the funds will be applied to their School Tours of America account. If after the funds are applied there is an overpayment on the account, School Tours of America will issue a reimbursement check to the family for the overage.

The fundraisers for each grade are as follows:

6th grade – Fall Faire/May Faire

7th grade – Fall Faire/Birchtree Auction/ Pizza Sales 2nd semester/May Faire

8th grade – Fall Faire/Pizza sales

The above activities are the only fundraisers that the school will be involved in for grades 6-8. If parents would like to get together and plan a small fundraiser with other parents/students that is fine, but the school will not be involved in receiving the money or planning the fundraiser. Some examples are Friday Fling, Organic Seeds, bake sales at Three Bears/Carrs/Fred Meyer, selling of Northern Lights coupon books, etc. Students can also fundraise individually, but again the school would not be involved in those activities.

As for payment to School Tours of America parents will need to set up their account for the student. Payment options would then be explained through School Tours of America.

Rites of Passage

Knighthood Ceremony - As children approach the age of 12, they are entering a stage in life where they begin to be more aware of their role in the wider human community. In order to recognize this time in their development, the sixth grade students will be participating in a knighthood project.

Just as the knights of old went out into the world to prove their worth and to serve the kingdom, our students will go out perform acts of courage and self-sacrifice in the community. Students will give 10 hours of volunteer time to the community. At the end of the Middle Ages block, those students who have completed this quest will be knighted in a formal knighting ceremony. It is expected that ALL students participate.

Rose Ceremony – At the beginning of the year, the eighth grade students will take part in the First Grade Rose Ceremony. During this ceremony, each eighth grader presents a first grader with a rose as a symbol of welcome to the Grades. At the end of the year, a Reverse Rose Ceremony will be held in which the first graders will give roses to the departing eighth graders.

Graduation – Graduation is the culminating event of a student's experience at Birchtree. For the eighth graders to focus on their part of the ceremony, **seventh grade students and parents** will host the graduation by serving the refreshments, handing out programs and set up and clean up.

Eighth grade students and teachers will be responsible for the order of the ceremony and artistic displays. Eighth Grade Graduation is an opportunity for the graduates to dress in more formal and festive attire. Students are asked to honor the Dress Code Policy as laid out in this handbook.

Extracurricular Activities

Athletics – Birchtree does have teams for some sports for grades 4-8 depending on the availability of coaches. These sports include cross country, track and field, basketball, and volleyball.

Other Extracurricular Activities (available according to supervisor availability) –

- Honors Orchestra
- Honors Choir
- Art Club
- Chess Club
- Girl Scouts

Teachers will communicate academic concerns with coaches. Coaches, teachers, and parents will work together to ensure that their involvement in the activity is not negatively influencing the students' academics.

Grading

Starting in sixth grade, teachers will record assignment grades in Synergy. It is the student's and parent's responsibility to regularly check Synergy to be aware of current progress in classes. If an assignment is missing or has a poor grade, it is the student's responsibility to go to the teacher and discuss what can be done to improve the student's grade.

Our report cards will remain standard-based, however, beginning in seventh grade, the student will also receive a letter grade based on the percentage in Synergy. It is important to understand that even though a student may be able to achieve each individual standard (ability), if he/she does not complete assignments on time, the letter grade may be significantly lower than the standard based grade.

Homework

Homework at Birchtree is an extension of the classroom. It gives the students practice in using what they are learning in class and allows them to develop skills. It provides them with an opportunity to work independently and develop habits of responsibility. Homework may take on many forms beyond traditional assignments. For example, a student may be asked to take a walk and record observations, cook a meal, measure square footage of a room, make a costume, etc.

Many times in the Upper Grades, students will be expected to finish assignments started in class such as rough drafts of essays, math practice, and main lesson books. Class time is often given and some students complete the assignments within that time. However, if a student does not finish due to choosing not to use the time for the assignment or just because of learning differences, that student must complete the assignment that evening for homework.

UNFINISHED WORK may result in a student missing recess for that day. If the student still does not complete the missing assignments, he/she will be kept in at recess until the assignments are completed.

Reading daily is always an essential part of homework. Students may read aloud to someone else or read to themselves, but they need to be reading material on their grade level daily for a minimum of 20 minutes.

Practicing his/her instrument is also a daily essential part of homework. The music teacher will provide guidelines for what is expected. It is important for each student to understand that not practicing affects the entire group and the performance at the twice yearly concerts. If a student is struggling with flute, he/she may also be asked to take the flute home and have some extra practice.

German homework is often assigned and may include studying vocabulary for quizzes and tests.

Research Projects are required for third-eighth grades at Birchtree. As students advance, more of the work will be done independently at home. The **Eighth Grade Independent Project** guidelines will be provided by your child's classroom teacher at the end of seventh grade.

Middle School Curriculum

Main Lesson Blocks

SIXTH GRADE

Language Arts

Sixth graders review parts of speech and verb tenses and write detailed reports and compositions. Students practice points of view in writing as well as expository and lab report writing. Students use the six-traits of writing and practice peer and self-editing. Oral presentations of reports and research are given with artistic component. Students practice lengthy recitation of poems. Student will read a variety of genres for both book reports and class discussion. Students will also read non-fiction that relates to main lesson blocks in order to practice reading for information. Class plays usually come from Roman or Medieval history.

Mathematics

The theme for sixth grade math is the sense of number and interrelationship between division, fractions, decimals, and percentages, with fractions playing a central role. Mental math is practiced with an emphasis on decimals and percentages. The main lesson blocks include business math and geometric drawing. Business mathematics brings the students in touch with the daily life and practical knowledge of finance. The study of geometry, both projective and the Euclidean constructions, are introduced. Weekly homework assignments, organization skills, and showing neat and organized work are emphasized.

Science

Physics, Geology/Mineralogy, and Astronomy are added to the curriculum in Sixth Grade. The study of science turns to the lawfulness that comes from cause-and-effect relationships in the physical world. The focus is on a threefold approach to the phenomena: observation, evaluation, and conceptualization. Experiments are conducted before the students who are taught to observe the phenomenon rather than proving a theory. In Sixth Grade the threefold approach is applied to electricity, magnetism, optics, acoustics, and heat in physics. The polarity between the heights and depths is explored in the complementary studies of Astronomy and Mineralogy.

History

The history block often begins with a quick review of the life and conquests of Alexander the Great, followed by the study of the Aeneid. Important highlights of life in the Roman Empire are studied, including the rise of the empire, the emperors, the republic, conquests, government, building and construction, barbarian incursions, and the fall of the empire. Later in the year students delve into the life of Medieval Europe. This includes, but is not limited to, feudalism, peasant life, knighthood, and the life of monasteries. The life of Mohammed and rise of Islam are studied. This naturally brings in the Crusades. Parallels to modern life become evident in this block. As part of their study of the Medieval period, students will participate in the Knighthood Project. This project requires the student to perform 12 hours of community service and culminates with a formal knighting ceremony.

Geography

Geography expands to include Europe, Africa, and the Middle East (paralleling the study of Rome and the medieval world).

SEVENTH GRADE

Language Arts

The Seventh Grade grammar lessons emphasize different styles of writing, use of an outline, paragraph format, self-editing, organization of compositions, note-taking, and the development of compound and complex sentences. Students will also apply their knowledge of basic parts of speech and sentence structure to be able to identify and use independent and dependent clauses. Creative writing and poetry is practice in the Language Arts block Wish Wonder and Surprise. Poetry continues to be spoken often, and oral reports are given to the class. The class play is usually placed in the renaissance or late medieval times. Independent and assigned reading with regular book reports gives the students an opportunity to explore different literature. Students will also read informative text and be able to summarize information for presentation in class. Identifying bias, making inferences with textual evidence, and describing tone and mood from textual evidence will also be practiced in seventh grade.

Mathematics

The Seventh Graders' introduction to algebra in the main lesson is an important milestone in the development of the students' abstract thinking. This serves as a crucial foundation for studying mathematics in high school. Another central theme in Seventh Grade is ratios, through which Pi, the Golden Ratio, and other irrational numbers are introduced. The study of geometry continues with the Euclidean constructions that were introduced in the Sixth Grade, culminating in the Pythagorean Theorem. Integers, Cartesian graphing, and the metric system are also studied in detail.

Science

In Chemistry, combustion, acids and bases, and the lime cycle form the content. The transformation of a substance through burning is an important highlight in this block. In Physics, the study is focused on an introduction to mechanics, for example, fulcrums are studied by first approaching the phenomena with seesaws and weights, and by identifying the levers all around them in their homes and lives, then developing a rule or law. The students then use the rule to predict leverage and mechanical advantage for new arrangements. In the Physiology block, the structure and functions of the digestive, respiratory, and circulatory systems, as well as, nutrition are also taught.

History

The students study European history from the late middle ages, the Age of Exploration, through the Renaissance. Key biographies of people who were forerunners of the times or individuals who particularly exemplified a character type from that time are studied in depth. As the curriculum moves toward the Reformation, the role of the Catholic Church is explored with emphasis on the developments that took place within the church that contributed to the turbulence of the times. Not only are the changes that took place in the religious/political life studied, but also the explorers in science, art, and world travel.

Geography

Study of Africa and Europe continues, as well as the study of Asia and South America through our continuing expansion outward from the local to the farther extents of the world. The effects of this outward expansion and trading on the global economy are also discussed in detail.

Perspective Drawing

The historical period known as the Renaissance forms the theme for our work in Seventh Grade, so it is appropriate that we study of the basic laws of perspective drawing, which were first formulated in 1413, at the dawn of the Renaissance. As they slowly master the technicalities of vanishing points, converging lines, interpolation and extrapolation the students will gain the ability to create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional sheet of paper. Each student will complete a "Perspective Drawing" portfolio containing a progression of simple to more complicated exercises, all

stressing artistic composition as well as mathematical accuracy. Among the especially technically demanding drawings will be those of pillars, staircases, cityscapes and interiors spaces.

EIGHTH GRADE

Language Arts

Eighth Grade students continue to refine their self-edit and peer editing skills, as well as, summarizing written work, and solidifying their grammar skills (passive and active verbs, direct and indirect objects, clauses, and phrases, pronouns). The spoken work continues with more oral reports including biographies, modern history, and geography. Poetry continues to be a lively part of the main lesson. The class play is often Shakespeare, a modern play with rich use of language, or a play associated with the historical time periods being studied. Plays will increase in complexity and may include singing, instrumental performance, and/or dance. A variety of book reports and in-class reading will also be expected. Students also complete a self-selected, independent project which has a research and written report component as well as an oral presentation to the class, parent, and community.

Mathematics

Eighth Grade Mathematics skills block time is dedicated to topics such as volumes, proportions, pre-algebra, and algebra. Specifically, theorems, factoring algebraic expressions, solving equations with two unknowns, graphing equations, plane and solid geometry, exponential growth formula, and the square root algorithm are studied. In the Platonic Solids main lesson block the underlying goal is to give students the opportunity to imaginatively move from two to three dimensional spaces and back again. Drawing the five geometric Platonic solids focuses concentration and strengthens the ability to follow precise instructions.

Science

In Eighth Grade Physics, students learn how certain concepts are applied to technology and natural systems. The content areas (mechanics, electricity, and magnetism) are deepened and now include simple motors, and the study of pressure (hydraulic and pneumatic), and the study of meteorology. Organic Chemistry includes an overview of previous work with sugars, starches, proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and oils. Human Anatomy includes the detailed study of the skeletal system and muscular systems, as well as the human eye and ear and how they function.

History

The Eighth Grade history curriculum strives to span the time from Elizabethan England through the 20th Century by looking at the social, political, and economic climates surrounding revolutions through individual biographies, art, literature, and pertinent readings. Aspects of American History, such as the Revolutionary War, the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, Civil and World Wars, are studied in depth. The history of revolutions and its world-wide impact is also explored. The culminating activity for our history studies is our Eighth Grade class trip to Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Washington DC.

Geography

The study of geography becomes more ambitious by encompassing the world through various approaches chosen by the teacher.

Special Classes

Our specialty teachers work to align their lessons with what is being studied in each block within the academic classroom.

Art – Art class is provided once a week. Students may be given lessons in a variety of artistic media including watercolor paints, chalk, oil pastels, pencils, charcoal and various sculpting mediums.

Technology – Starting in sixth grade, students will have a Technology class once a week in which they will progressively be introduced to computer and research skills as well as discussing the civic responsibilities connected with the internet and electronic communication. They will also be introduced to some of the history of the computer and information age with the goal of being “masters” of technology, not slaves to it.

German – In German class, students will learn both the language and culture of Germany. As they advance through the grades, more speaking and writing in the German language will be required.

Orchestra – Every student at Birchtree is required to participate in Orchestra by playing the violin, viola, cello or bass. Besides developing a love for music, Orchestra develops the ability to work as a group, to listen to each other and to oneself and to develop the self-discipline required to master any new task.

Movement – In the Upper Grades, Movement class may include traditional sport blocks such as basketball and dodge ball and will also include lessons in traditional folk dancing and circus skills.

Handwork – Handwork lessons give a student the opportunity to develop their creativity, their fine motor skills, and their will to work through the steps of a process until it is complete. In the Upper Grades, handwork lessons may include doll/puppet making, wet and needle felting, and sewing either by hand or machine.

Woodworking – The fundamental tools students use for woodworking are handsaws, chisels, gouges, rasps, files, and sandpaper. With these tools they learn to shape, smooth, and polish wood. Woodwork also gives students lessons which develop their will – the ability to practice patience, perseverance, and pride in their work. Some projects which may be part of woodworking are making a wooden spoon, a bowl, and a stool.

Sources

Alice Birney Waldorf-Inspired School Parent and Student Handbook, Sacramento School District

Birchtree Charter School Family Guide

Mat-Su School District Student Handbook

Shepherd Valley Waldorf School Student Handbook