



*Middle
School
Curriculum
Guide*



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF CHICAGO, SOUTH LOOP
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

2016-17

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Welcome to Middle School!

While each year group presents an exciting stage of development for students, the Middle School years are a time when students experience physical, emotional and cognitive growth. At BISC South Loop, Middle School students further develop their interests and learn new skills while also encountering new challenges. Our Middle School curriculum responds specifically to the needs of students ages 11 to 14 by enabling independence and interdependence through discrete subject learning and themes, as well as more traditional subject-based learning.

Middle School students study a balanced program of subjects: English, Mathematics, Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics), History, Geography, Music, Drama, Art, Design & Technology, Information and Communications Technology, Physical Education and World Languages (French, Spanish, German and Mandarin). These courses, taught by highly qualified specialist teachers, follow the English National Curriculum and prepare students for the rigors of High School and also the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The curriculum focuses on skills, which promote self-reflection, and provides students with the opportunity to make sense of their learning. It also encourages students to use the latest media platforms to present their learning and express their thinking.

The transition from Year 6 to Year 7 (Grade 5 to Grade 6) can be challenging, and faculty carries out significant work to ensure a smooth passage in which children feel confident. The Primary School faculty works closely with Middle School faculty to ensure students' learning continues and new students are well known by staff who have studied their transcripts and will have met them before they start.

We are passionate about learning and ensuring that every student has a school experience that will develop a love of learning and the skills and knowledge necessary for success in High School and beyond.

Mr. Andrew Gilhooly
Head of Secondary



“Middle School is a blast. I really enjoy learning about lots of different subjects. It makes every school day different and learning exciting. I also like the mix of individual and group activities during lessons.”

Neha Gupta
Year 8 (Grade 7)

Mathematics



Mathematics

In Middle School, Mathematics is taught in a holistic way that covers all elements of the subject: Algebra, Number, Geometry and Statistics. The nature of focusing on the same four topics throughout Middle School means students are able to consolidate and extend their learning. The course also incorporates investigation work and real-world applications of these mathematical concepts. The curriculum is enriched by participation in both U.S. and UK math competitions, which take place in and out of school. By the end of Year 9 (Grade 8), each student is able to access the High School curriculum.

Topics of Study: Year 7

Algebra	Number
<ul style="list-style-type: none">SequencesLinear functions and graphsMappingsSolving equationsDeveloping formulaeManipulating algebraic expressionsCoordinates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decimals and decimal arithmeticFraction arithmeticPercentage calculationsNegative number arithmeticRoundingRatio and proportionPrime factor formIndices and roots
Geometry	Statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Perimeter, area and volumeAngle rules, including polygonsConstructing trianglesTransformationsNets of cuboids3D DrawingsArea and perimeter of circles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">AveragesProbabilityDrawing and interpreting charts and graphsInterpreting data

Topics of Study: Year 8

Algebra	Number
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sequences, including quadratic and fractionalFunctions and graphs, including non-linear graphsSolving equationsDeveloping formulaeManipulating algebraic expressionsGraphing and algebraic solution of simultaneous equationsLogic and proof	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Decimals and decimal arithmetic; fraction arithmeticRoundingPercentages, including interest calculationsPrime factor formMetric and imperial measuresRatio and proportionIndices and roots
Geometry	Statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Perimeter, area and volume, and surface areaAngle rules, including polygonsTransformationsArea and perimeter of circlesLoci and construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Averages from tabled dataProbabilityCharts and graphs, including stem and leaf, and scatter graphsInterpreting data

Topics of Study: Year 9

Algebra

- Functions and their graphs, including non-linear graphs
- Solving equations
- Developing formulae
- Manipulating algebraic expressions
- Graphing and algebraic solution of simultaneous equations
- Logic and proof
- Solving inequalities
- Using graphs to model real-life situations

Number

- Percentages, including compound interest and reverse calculation
- Standard form
- Direct and indirect proportions
- Negative and fractional indices
- Surds

Geometry

- Perimeter, area and volume, and surface area
- Angle rules, including polygons
- Transformations
- Area and perimeter of circles
- Bearings
- Trigonometry with right and non-right angled triangles
- Compound measures and bounds

Statistics

- Averages
- Probability, including conditional probability
- Charts and graphs, including cumulative frequency and box plots
- Interpreting data

English



English

English skills empower students in all aspects of their schooling and adult lives. As well as communication, grammar and analytical skills, English provides students with an opportunity to enhance their ability to think critically and make evaluations. Through their study of English, Middle School students develop their formal essay writing, problem solving, presentation delivery and persuasion. English is a challenging and rewarding subject that allows students to experience classical literature along with contemporary texts. In this sense, English is more than a set of rules to be followed, but a way of developing empathy by exploring culture, places and people. Methods of assessment include creative writing, formal analytical essays, discussion with peers, speeches and presentations about writers' skills and techniques. The study of grammar is embedded in all areas of the curriculum, and our goal is to foster students who reflect on their targets and evaluate the effectiveness of their choices.

Topics of Study: Year 7

Autumn Term

- **The Novel - "Holes":** Students read "Holes" by Louis Sachar and discuss, reflect and write on its themes, characters and settings. The author's use of parallel plotting and exploration of friendship, prejudice and the relationship between past and present are particular features of the novel, and students have opportunities to write analytically and creatively. Students learn a structured approach to essay writing that's built upon in successive units through the Middle School English curriculum. Assessment of learning in this unit is through a formal extended essay on character development in the novel, as well as through shorter reading and writing tasks.
- **The Art of the Horror Story:** This unit has perennially enthused and inspired even the most reluctant writers to produce an original short story that creates suspense and terror. Students learn the features and conventions of the horror genre and apply these to the classic five-stage structure of a narrative. Much of this term sees students completing short writing tasks, focusing on how to create compelling action, description and dialogue. They learn the importance of editing and revising their writing with its readership in mind. The unit culminates in students writing their own extended story, employing the techniques and skills they have built up over the term.

Spring Term

- **Shakespearean Drama - "Macbeth":** Students read, analyze and perform key scenes in Shakespeare's tragedy, "Macbeth". They focus on plot and characters to understand the piece's social, cultural and historical background, thus better understanding its themes. Students finish the term with a greater understanding of how to interpret the often complex imagery used by Shakespeare, supported by frequent short writing activities based on the play. They also learn to appreciate and enjoy this classic drama for its powerful portrayal of ambition and justice. Learning is assessed through the completion of an extended analytical essay on the character of Lady Macbeth.

Summer Term

- **Nonfiction Writing - Real and Fantastical Animals:** This unit builds upon and extends the grammar, punctuation and spelling techniques taught throughout the year, while broadening the range of nonfiction texts and language devices that students have experienced. Students are engaged in their learning through a running theme of animals, connecting the reading and writing activities they undertake. For example, once they've learned the features of writing to inform, explain and describe, students read animal textbook entries and then create their own entry based on an imaginative, fictional creature. Speaking and listening skills are developed throughout this unit via debates and discussions. The final assessment sees students writing and delivering a persuasive speech.
- **End-of-Year Exams:** Using skills developed over the course of the year, students complete a reading exam, in which they analyze a previously unseen fiction extract, and a writing exam that requires them to complete an imaginative description of a setting.

Topics of Study: Year 8

Autumn Term

- **Travel Writing:** Throughout this unit, students explore travel writing and its language features. Students review advertisements, newspaper articles, biographical accounts and travel guides. In addition, they study media texts and documentaries. Students build upon writing skills they've acquired up to this point and learn how to quote and refer to texts. There are frequent opportunities for students to improve their speaking and discussion skills, which enhance their understanding of the texts studied. Formal assessment of presentation skills is carried out with an end-of-unit project in which students work in pairs to present a factual guide to a country of their choice. The study of grammar, syntax and vocabulary is a constant throughout the year and incorporated into lessons and homework assignments.
- **Shakespearean Drama - "Romeo and Juliet":** The outcome of this unit is two formally assessed pieces of work on "Romeo and Juliet": analysis of the ball scene and how Shakespeare establishes and builds tension during the second fight scene. Students start the unit by studying the context of "Romeo and Juliet" and Elizabethan England. Skills in stage combat are also developed in lessons, which aim to foster students' confidence in the delivery of Shakespeare's language and ideas. Incorporated into the study of Shakespeare's language is the development of key terminology for literary analysis and how to apply it. Building towards the final assessments, students explore and analyze the ways in which characters are presented and developed. In addition, they learn how to identify, analyze and evaluate linguistic devices within "Romeo and Juliet" and the effects achieved.

Winter Term

- **Writing Short Fiction - Twisted Tales:** Building upon skills previously learned, students explore short stories with a twist. This has proven to be a popular unit and includes the analysis of stories such as Roald Dahl's "Lamb to the Slaughter" and Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery". The aim of this unit is to encourage students to learn and then experiment with conventions of storytelling, expand their vocabulary and use more ambitious syntactical structures in their writing. Students are assessed through an analytical essay on a short story, as well as through the production of their own original twisted tale. Throughout the unit, students complete grammar tasks for classwork and homework, learning to combine creativity with accuracy and control in expression.

Summer Term

- **Analyzing and Writing Poetry:** This unit builds upon poetry that has been taught up to Year 6 (Grade 5) while broadening the range of texts and styles of poetry studied. Students analyze the works of poets like William Blake and William Wordsworth. A significant portion of this unit is the learning of poetic terminology (such as personification and use of figurative language) and how poets create imagery. Students also learn how to compare and contrast poems, which is a skill that prepares them for High School. Students focus on poems that refer to time and place, and texts that explore the city of Chicago are used to encourage students to produce their own "Chicago sonnet" as their final assessment.
- **End-of-Year Exams:** Using skills developed over the course of the year, students complete a reading exam, where they analyze a previously unseen poem, and a writing exam that requires them to complete an imaginative account of an event.

Topics of Study: Year 9

Autumn Term

- **Creative Writing - Imagination and Fantasy:** The outcome of this unit is three formally assessed pieces of work: analysis of extracts from Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein” and Franz Kafka’s “The Metamorphosis”, and the creation of a short story. Students explore the conventions and linguistic features of a range of literature and learn how to apply these features. They develop their writing skills by learning how to effectively structure a short story and use a range of sentence types for effect. The unit of work begins with an exploration of how writers establish setting and character through the study of an extract from “Frankenstein” and “The Metamorphosis”. Students use inferences and deductions to help develop effective characters and settings of their own. Time is also spent developing vocabulary and learning how language can be used for effect.
- **“The Tempest” and “A Christmas Carol”:** In this unit, students are formally assessed on two pieces of work: analysis of the character Prospero (William Shakespeare’s “The Tempest”) and analysis of the character Ebenezer Scrooge (Charles Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol”). Students start the unit by studying the context of “The Tempest” and Elizabethan England. Skills in stage presence are also developed in lessons, which aim to foster students’ confidence in the delivery of Shakespeare’s language and ideas. Incorporated into the study of Shakespeare’s and Dickens’s language is the development of key terminology for literary analysis and how it’s applied. Building towards the final assessments, students explore and analyze how characters are presented and developed. They also learn how to identify, analyze and evaluate linguistic devices within the two texts, and the effects achieved through these devices. The study of grammar, syntax and vocabulary is constant throughout the year and incorporated into lessons and homework assignments.

Winter Term

- **Nonfiction - Exam Skills:** This unit is designed to prepare students for the different styles of writing expected in Year 10 (Grade 9) and Year 11 (Grade 10) exams. The outcome of this unit is two formally assessed pieces of work: a newspaper report representing a particular bias and a piece of explanatory writing. Students explore how to use bias to shape reader reactions and revise the conventions of persuasive writing. In addition, students learn the conventions of writing to argue, advise and inform. There’s a heavy focus on generic writing skills, such as how to effectively link paragraphs, the importance of whole text cohesion and how to use sophisticated punctuation.
- **“The Boy In the Striped Pajamas”:** This unit sees students create two formally assessed written assignments: an analysis of author John Boyne’s purpose and the techniques used to convey his point of view, and how he establishes atmosphere. There’s a focus on research skills; students use a selection of Holocaust texts to develop their knowledge of the context for the novel. Further skills-based work is covered, and students learn to be selective in their retrieval of textual evidence to build the strongest response to an exam-style question. Reading skills are further developed through the study of how writers create character, setting, mood and atmosphere. In addition, students learn to explore the significance of different narrative viewpoints. This novel also provides a good opportunity for students to note the use of sophisticated punctuation in context and consider its significance. Throughout the year, students independently read a range of additional texts.

Summer Term

- **“Maus”:** The outcome of this unit is an oral presentation focused on Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel “Maus”. Throughout this unit, students develop a comprehensive understanding of different forms of literature with the opportunity to read Anne Frank’s nonfiction text “The Diary of a Young Girl” during reading lessons. The aim is to develop students’ knowledge of the ways in which writers communicate important messages through different art forms, but more importantly to develop their confidence when presenting ideas to a group in a formal setting.
- **End-of-Year Exams:** The students’ end-of-year exams see them explore poetry and develop their writing skills. They explore a range of poems in class and analyze one of them for the exam. In addition to this, students develop their writing skills in class before writing a response to an unseen writing task.

Science



Science

Science is an essential skill *and* an inspirational subject that can set students on pathways leading to a broad spectrum of opportunities. The Science Department takes a unique and enthusiastic approach to science learning. Unlike in many U.S. schools, all students sit a rigorous and well-produced set of integrated courses that build upon and complement each other. Beginning in Year 7 (Grade 6), students embark on a course that contains the foundations of all aspects of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Topics of Study: Year 7

General Science

- **Labtastic:** Students engage with the lab, setting the stage for them to use more advanced laboratory equipment, consider safety issues and develop the scientific method used throughout Middle School Science.

Biology

- **Reproduction:** This topic deals with adolescent development and also delves into the science behind fertilization, fetal development, pregnancy and the menstrual cycle – important aspects of human and animal biology.
- **Tissues and Transplants:** Students tackle cell biology, learning the functions of animal and plant cells. Taught to operate microscopes, they learn the process of creating their own slides and identifying cell organelles. They also investigate how cells are organized into tissues and organs, and consider the historical and social perspectives of tissues and organs in transplants and medical science. This includes a lively discussion of the English and Scottish body snatchers of the 19th century.
- **Classified - Ecology Matters:** This unit offers students the opportunity to unearth ideas behind the symbiotic relationship of life on Earth by considering habitats, adaptations, food relationships and evidence, predators and their prey, and the idea of parasites. Through this, students gain a deeper understanding of the classification system of animals and plants, genetics and how nature produces amazing variation.

Chemistry

- **Rock On:** In this key look at geology, students identify various rocks and investigate the main three types of rock formation. It's a topic that takes students on a journey from prehistoric seas and rivers to volcanoes and earthquakes, learning how science is continuously changing and how ideas are challenged.
- **Solutions:** What does crime scene investigation have to do with a glass of sea water? This topic links the ideas together to help students consider the wider implications of their learning. Students use their lab skills to learn about solutions in chemistry and how they can be separated and investigated; for example, using chromatography or even learning to simply use a condenser.
- **Bubbles, Bangs and Burning:** This unit presents a practical, lab-based look at chemical reactions. Students expand their knowledge of factors affecting chemical reactions as well as what happens when chemical reactions get out of control. Students also consider the ethical piece of science by investigating fire safety methods and explosions.
- **Acids and Alkalis:** This unit involves several labs that get students thinking about the chemistry of acids and alkalis, and how we test for them using a scale. They investigate human uses for acids and widen their look to include how nature uses these interesting types of chemicals.

Physics

- **Sustainable Living:** This topic leads students to discover more about energy and how to describe it, and presents a look at the fundamental law of energy conservation. From this, students build ideas of global science issues by considering renewable, nonrenewable, alternative and new energy resources. They consider the deep meaning of how science relates to them by exploring whether science offers the cause and/or the solution to the world's energy problems.

- **Practical Particles:** This essential topic focuses on the important skill of modeling. It allows students to forge ideas about why solids, liquids and gases undergo the processes they do when their temperatures are changed. It also looks at the reasons why substances dissolve and how diffusion occurs in liquids and gases, answering the important question, “Why can I smell that trashcan?”
- **Shocking Circuits:** Advancing students’ ideas about electrical circuits through lab work and Inquiry, this unit further engages students’ perceptions of modeling and how it’s used in science to explain ideas.

Topics of Study: Year 8

Biology

- **Food and Digestion:** This unit engages students in nutrition and exercise. It delves into the science behind the importance of a healthy diet and the implications of malnutrition and eating disorders. Students learn to explain why some nutrients have to be broken down before the body can use them and to use models and analogies to describe how enzymes break down large molecules during digestion. The unit includes an exciting look into the anatomy of the digestion system.
- **Exercise and Respiration:** Students discover that cells obtain energy through respiration and use this to explain why tissues need solid blood supply and to identify similarities in aerobic respiration in animals and plants.
- **Microbes and Disease:** This topic gets students thinking about cleanliness and the microbes around them. They learn to classify bacteria and fungi as cellular microorganisms, and viruses as microorganisms that are smaller than a cell. They also analyze the positive and negative effects of microbes on their lives. This leads to study of the immune system and how humans wage war with microbes in the body.

Chemistry

- **“It’s Elementary, My Dear Watson”:** Students learn all about the atom, the basic building block of matter.
- **Mixed Up:** Students discover that compounds consist of fixed combinations of atoms that cannot be easily separated. They also learn how to represent atoms and combinations of atoms with symbols and formulae. By building upon previous understanding, students use the more sophisticated particle model to explain how chemical reactions take place.
- **Environmental Chemistry:** This unit covers study into how the land, sea and air comprise the environment, how human activities can lead to pollution of our environment, and how science can be used to overcome these problems.

Physics

- **Reach for the Stars:** How big is the solar system? Why is our sun yellow? What is precession? How big is the universe? This inquiry-led unit allows students to explore the solar system and beyond, and looks at some of the missions of organizations like NASA and European Space Agency.
- **Heating and Cooling:** This topic investigates thermal energy and how it’s transferred in nature via conduction, convection and radiation. It builds upon previous knowledge of particle modeling and relates this to wider ideas of cooking and sustainable living.
- **Magnetism:** Students learn to identify magnetic materials and their properties. They use the idea of a force field to explain the patterns of magnetic fields produced by permanent magnets and electromagnets. Engaging with electromagnet creation, they discover the factors that affect them and their uses.
- **Light:** Students learn how light transfers energy and use this idea to describe the nature and propagation of light. They explain the behavior of light, including reflection, refraction and absorption, through experimental work.
- **Sound:** This very loud unit enables students to use the ideas of frequency and amplitude to explain how sound is produced, transmitted and detected.

Topics of Study: Year 9

Biology

- **Extinction:** This topic examines why so many of the organisms we see in the fossil record are no longer living. Students look at human-induced extinction, ancient examples and the end of the age of dinosaurs.
- **Environmental Science:** Students learn about the inner workings of complex ecosystems and explore how humans influence the environment, as well as how it affects us.
- **Genetics:** Building on knowledge gained in previous years, students look at how diversity is useful for life, how it comes about and the role of genes versus environment in determining physical characteristics.
- **Health:** This topic distinguishes between the terms “fit” and “healthy”, going on to discuss the various aspects of health. It looks at some of the most important issues with regard to nutrition and exercise.

Chemistry

- **Reactivity of Metals:** This topic begins to familiarize students with how metals interact with the environment. Through experiments, students place reactivity in a league table - which one will be crowned reactivity champion?
- **Using Chemistry:** Students further their knowledge of experimental technique during this highly practical topic. Examples include displacement, electrolysis and energetics.
- **Materials and Their Properties:** Students learn why certain metals are selected for building and construction, diving into material chemistry and properties.

Physics

- **Space and Gravity:** This topic is always a student favorite. They look at gravity and how it affects our exploration of space. In particular, the unit focuses on satellites and the nature of orbits.
- **Speed:** Students become familiar with Newtonian laws of motion as they race through this topic. Balanced and unbalanced forces take center stage while students also discuss key advances in transportation.
- **Energy:** This topic delves into the field of electrical use and production, and concepts such as power, efficiency and sustainability.

Social Studies



Geography

The Social Studies Department develops students into active, educated and mindful citizens of the world, and Geography provides students with the opportunity to investigate many major issues that face global citizens today. The study of Geography has never been more relevant, and careers connected with Geography have never been more plentiful. Geographers become cartographers, climatologists, geographic information systems specialists, meteorologists, real estate developers, surveyors and urban planners. Geographers think critically and globally, a key skill that employers seek. Students have the chance to apply their knowledge and understanding of Geography through a series of fieldwork studies at a local and regional level. Previous fieldwork studies include beach profiles, urban transects and environmental surveys.

Topics of Study: Year 7

Autumn Term

- **Earthquakes and Volcanoes:** Students study where volcanoes and earthquakes occur to learn what happens during these episodes, understand how people can reduce the effects, know how economic aid can help earthquake and volcano victims, and learn why people want to live in active zones.
- **Population 7 Billion:** In this unit, students learn how to describe growth in the global population, why the global population is increasing so rapidly, how to manage population growth and the issues surrounding population growth.

Winter Term

- **Flood Disaster:** Students learn how to read and analyze a flood hydrograph and understand the causes of flooding. They develop their ability to describe the effects of flooding in countries of varying socioeconomic levels and to compare the effects of flooding in the UK and Mozambique. They also learn how to manage flooding.
- **Exploring the USA:** This topic sees students learn the main physical and human features of the United States. They gain understanding of the various landscapes and explain the effects of glaciation.

Summer Term

- **World Sport:** Students learn how to describe the location of sporting stadiums across the United States and understand the economic, environmental and social effects of sporting stadiums on the surrounding area. They also delve into the term “sustainable” in the context of the Olympic Games.
- **Exploring England:** In exploring England, students come to understand the main physical and human features and gain an understanding of the various landscapes. Students also learn to describe the various UK weather patterns.

Topics of Study: Year 8

Autumn Term

- **Coastal Environments:** How does weathering and erosion affect coastlines? How does the sea shape the coast? Students learn what causes some parts of the coast to collapse and how to protect it against the sea.
- **Investigation Brazil:** Students explore Brazil, learning how to locate it, identify its various regions, analyze its economic development and understand the effects of deforestation.

Winter Term

- **Weather and Climate:** The unit begins with a focus on reading and analyzing maps and satellite images, as well as using satellite images to predict weather patterns. Students learn the difference between weather and climate, how to accurately draw climate graphs and understand the three main types of rainfall.

- **Shopping and Geography:** We wrap up Winter Term by learning the differences between the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Students also understand the concept of sphere of influence, design a questionnaire and learn how to accurately conduct an environmental quality survey.

Summer Term

- **Crime and Geography:** Students describe and analyze crime maps, learn how environments can be shaped to prevent crime and map crime in the local area.
- **Can the Earth Cope?:** This unit focuses on Earth's various ecosystems, and students learn how vegetation is related to climate, soil and human activity. They also draw links between population and resources, and understand how to best manage resources.

Topics of Study: Year 9

Autumn Term

- **Development and Geography:** What are the various indicators of development? Students explore sustainability, ways development connects parts of the world and how people benefit and lose as a result of development.
- **Sustainable Tourism:** Students learn about the various types of tourism and understand the importance of the tourism industry and how it's changing.

Winter Term

- **Global Fashion Industry:** In this unit, students gain awareness of how people, places and environments are connected through study of the global fashion industry. They learn about globalization, who takes part in the chain of production and what happens if the chain is broken.
- **Virtual Volcanoes and Earthquakes:** Students explore tectonic patterns and processes. They also learn what effects tectonic processes may have on countries at different stages of economic development.

Summer Term

- **Local Actions, Global Effects:** The final unit teaches students to carry out an environmental fieldwork inquiry. Students learn about the causes and consequences of the use and misuse of rivers, and how local actions that produce pollution can have global effects. They learn to recognize leisure uses and possible conflicts of interest between them as well as the causes and consequences of global climate change.

History

History focuses on the core skills of interpretation, cause and consequence, change and continuity, and significance. The development of these skills enables students to gain meaningful understanding of the past and become independent learners by adopting a transferable skill set. Middle School History covers topics from the prehistoric era to the 20th century, with a focus on international and American history. Students delve into fascinating periods with a broad chronological and international scope, while developing skills that encourage them to become inquisitive historians.

The course encourages students to understand the “bigger picture” of the past with each year of study targeting an overarching theme to bind the topics: Beliefs and Lifestyles in Year 7 (Grade 6), Revolutions in Year 8 (Grade 7) and Human Rights in Year 9 (Grade 8). Students are assessed on a modular basis with an assessment at the end of each topic; this is consolidated with an end-of-year assessment. There are regular factual knowledge quizzes and projects. However, the majority of assessments require students to structure and express their ideas through extended writing. Focus is placed on writing throughout the course with the intention of developing literacy skills, building confidence and preparing students for an external examination, should they choose to take History in High School.

Topics of Study: Year 7

- **Medicine through Time - Prehistoric to 20th Century:** Why did prehistoric people drill holes in their heads? Why did medieval plague doctors wear beaks? Who was the greatest medical mind in history? These are just some of the exciting questions that our first Year 7 topic addresses. This unit is designed as an introduction to Middle School History, giving students a broad chronological understanding and introducing the key skills of a historian. Plus, students love learning the fascinating (and sometimes disgusting) details about medicine through time.
- **Medieval Times - Lifestyles and Culture:** This unit examines the lifestyles, beliefs and values of Medieval Europeans. Students look at the importance of religion, warfare and the feudal system, and build their own castle.
- **Renaissance Europe - Roller Coaster of Religion:** During this unit, students look at the most tumultuous years in English history and England’s most notorious royal family. The focus of the unit is change and continuity, with the students creating their own roller coaster of religion that demonstrates the ups and down of religious policy. They also learn how religion led to executions, revolution and war. Finally, the students consider how these changes affected ordinary people, which lends meaningful insight when students come to their next unit on colonization.
- **Early Colonization - Who Were the First Americans?** This unit introduces students to the first settlers of America and requires them to consider what happened when Native America and Renaissance Europe met. We study early interaction between the two: exploration, colonial settlements and conflict. Students must demonstrate skills of empathy, considering the motives for each group’s actions and drawing their own conclusions about the events.
- **The Salem Witch Trials - An Investigation:** This investigation into the Salem Witch Trials allows students to discover one of America’s most infamous miscarriages of justice. Students gain insight into the importance of religion and belief amongst early Puritan settlers.

Topics of Study: Year 8

- **The Empire Strikes Back! Imperialism and Colonies:** This unit, focusing on change and continuity, considers how Britain became the most powerful nation on Earth by the mid-19th century. Changes in empire, population, industry, farming and transport all led to the growth of a nation. Students also consider the human cost of Imperialism and the effects on those who were colonized.
- **American Revolution - Fighting for Freedom:** Students learn about the battle for America’s freedom from British rule, and gain insight into colonial America. The focus on cause and consequence encourages students to consider the main reasons for the Revolution and the American victory.

- **Slave Trade in America - Fighting Injustice:** This unit covers the Slave Triangle, Middle Passage, life on plantations and slave rebellion. Students study Booker T. Washington's interpretation of slavery as "miserable, desolate and discouraging". The unit then goes on to consider how and why the slave trade was abolished in America.
- **Westward Expansion - A Social Revolution:** Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness - why did Americans move west? This exciting unit considers what motivated individuals and groups to risk their lives to go west. Students learn about frontier towns and harsh justice, the Indian Wars and Battle of Little Bighorn.

Topics of Study: Year 9

- **World War I - The First Total War:** This unit considers how revolutions in technology and warfare resulted in the bloodiest conflict in human history to date. Students learn about the causes, course and effects of the First World War, and consider what it would have been like to live in the trenches.
- **Nazi Germany - How Did Hitler Come to Power?:** Students learn about Fascism and consider challenging questions about the 20th century's most infamous government. How did Hitler rise to power? How did Hitler control the German people? Did life improve for some under the Nazis?
- **The Holocaust - 20th Century's Worst Human Rights Violation?** This investigation into the Holocaust helps students understand one of history's most challenging and distressing topics. The unit encourages students to see those who suffered not as numbers but as human beings whose stories deserve to be understood. Students investigate a real victim of the Holocaust and present to their classmates.
- **America 1918-1945 - A Divided Union?:** Students discover more about America's story during the first half of the 20th century with previous units on Russia and Germany offering interesting context. They learn about women's rights, immigrants and African Americans. They investigate organized crime under Prohibition, the economic boom of the 1920s and subsequent crash and Great Depression. The unit also considers America during the Second World War.
- **Vietnam War:** This unit gives students the chance to investigate one of America's most controversial wars. They learn about the causes, course and effects. There's a specific focus on factors that led to the American withdrawal from Vietnam, which offers invaluable insight into the rise of the media and its effect on government policy.

World Languages

Name & age

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Nationality

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Family

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de possessive

Pet

World Languages

Learning a foreign language is a gateway to different cultures and countries. It also helps students develop awareness of their own languages, cultures and customs, encouraging them to become sensitive to others and developing confident communication skills. Middle School students expand their skills in understanding and using written and spoken language, enabling them to manage a visit to a target language country. Students are expected to effectively use the target language beginning with everyday conversation and spanning to more intricate and developed subjects, deepening their knowledge of culture and grammar along the way. Aside from grammatical rules, which are explained in English to ensure full clarification, World Languages teachers primarily instruct in the target language using a communicative approach. Teachers also employ a variety of creative resources and activities that appeal to all learning styles, while encompassing the four key skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Subject Breadth

Students study four hours of one foreign language per week (French, Spanish, German or Mandarin), and those with a particular talent and prior learning experience may continue to study French and Spanish for two hours of each language per week. Students already fluent in one language should select another; we do not offer a program for bilingual language learning. The subject breadth means students gain a solid foundation for continuing study at a second-year High School level or higher.

Assessment

Homework is set weekly and assessments are set throughout the year, focusing on the key skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing, with follow-up target- and goal-setting on an individual basis. The Middle School program builds upon language delivery in Primary School; however, support is provided for students with limited prior knowledge, and the focus remains on each student's goals and progress.

Resources

Technology plays an important role in the World Languages Department, which integrates authentic and computer-based materials into curricula. All language classes make use of target language multimedia software, blogs, podcasts and other online material. In addition to maximizing technology uses, the program exposes students to age-appropriate popular music and films, and students take part in group, pair and individual tasks and activities during each lesson.

Supplemental Activities

Language skills improve through practice, so we aspire to find new and creative ways for students to try their language skills in real-life situations. In addition to role play and drama activities that encourage impulsive speech, students take part in local field trips conducted in the target language; these have included a cookery lesson at the Alliance Française, a walking tour of Pilsen and the Mexican Art Museum, and visits to Chinatown and Christkindlmarkt. Students are also encouraged to take part in residential field trips to further deepen their language skills and cultural awareness; previous destinations include France, Québec, Costa Rica and Puerto Rico.

Performing
Arts



Drama

From imagination and empathy to solid communication, Drama teaches skills that students can apply in all school subjects and their lives outside of school. The benefits of studying Drama are considerable, so Middle School students take part in one Drama lesson each week. Students cover a wide range of topics, learning technical elements and vocabulary across genres, styles and famous works. Students work in a variety of group sizes and regularly create performance work during their lessons. Many elements are also cross-curricular and support learning in more than one subject.

Topics of Study

Some topics covered include:

- **Drama from Other Cultures:** Students explore stories from other cultures and devise their own versions, consolidating previously learned skills.
- **“Macbeth”:** Students explore different scenes from “Macbeth” to analyze the use of text, group performance, lighting, sound staging and costume.
- **Scary Movies:** Students compose horror music; this is used as a stimulus to create a scene. The use of music as stimulus is explored, as well as stereotype, staging and costume.
- **Live Theater:** Students comment on the use of voice, movement and genre to evaluate a live performance.

Extracurricular Activities

There are several opportunities to take part in extracurricular Drama activities. Students may audition for school performances and join Drama Club, which meets once a week after school, to explore and develop drama techniques; participants put on public performances and take part in school recitals.

Music

Music plays an integral role in students' education, and we're proud to offer The Juilliard-Nord Anglia Performing Arts Program. As part of our Juilliard collaboration, students are drawn into a Juilliard-curated repertoire of 12 core works that encompass a wide range of musical genres and styles, opening doors to different cultures and historical periods. Research shows music skills are transferable to many other subjects, and the techniques and disciplines students learn in the Music course further our goal of creating innovative, ambitious learners. In Middle School, students develop the music skills they already have and also learn exciting new skills. Students explore music through a variety of creative lessons housed in the virtual Juilliard Creative Classroom. The lessons are divided into three parts: focused practice, areas of study (focused on the 12 core works) and music theory based on keyboard skills.

Extracurricular Activities

Classroom learning is supplemented by performance groups, private lessons and booster sessions. The aim of these activities is to help students develop and extend their performance skills, and create relevant and exciting opportunities for further learning.

- **After School Arts with Juilliard:** Students may supplement their instrumental and vocal skills with private lessons taught by Juilliard alumni before and after school.
- **Band:** There are two bands, one for all players and another for students with advanced music skills. These groups meet after school and play a wide range of pieces.
- **Choir:** Choir meets twice weekly to explore many singing styles and performs frequently during the school year.
- **Small Groups:** From Jazz Band to Wind Quintet and concertos to singer-songwriter groups, the school offers several small performance groups that meet before school and during break time. The Music Department forms these groups to suit students' abilities and needs, so there's an opportunity for every musician. These groups also perform during the school year.
- **School Performances:** Students may audition for drama and musical performances.
- **Booster Sessions:** During the week, music teachers are available for informal drop-in booster sessions before school. Organized by instrumental groups, these sessions give students a chance to obtain extra support.
- **Recital Program:** Twice each term, the Music Department invites students who have demonstrated commitment to their practice and completed a piece to a high standard to play in a recital. These informal events, held after school at the public piano in the lobby, celebrate students' work and are open to family members.
- **Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM):** ABRSM is the UK's largest music education body and the world's leading provider of music exams. ABRSM's mission is to inspire achievement in music. In partnership with the Royal Schools of Music, ABRSM supports high-quality music-making and learning around the world. Students in Years 5-13 may sit their ABRSM grade during school time. With full support from teachers and booster sessions, students may pursue the ABRSM to measure their musical progress and earn college credit at UK universities.

Creative Arts



Art

Art is an important element of the curriculum that enable students to explore visual, tactile and other sensory experiences, which help them communicate ideas and meanings. Students work with new and traditional media, developing confidence, competence, imagination and creativity. They learn to appreciate and value images and artifacts across times and cultures, and understand the contexts in which they were made. Students reflect critically on their own and other people's work, judging quality, value and meaning. They learn to think and act as artists, craftspeople and designers, working creatively and intelligently.

Middle School students follow an integrated, critical, practical and theoretical study of Art that cultivates an appreciation of the work of artists and designers from a range of cultural backgrounds. Students study three projects each school year, which involve critical and contextual study, introductory drawings and experimentations that lead to a final piece. Each project has a structured brief that sets the project overview and requirements. Students are graded and evaluated at the completion of each project. To continue studies of Art in High School, a student must achieve a B grade or higher in Art and English on their Year 9 (Grade 8) final report.

Topics of Study

Students develop their creative, intellectual and artistic abilities through investigating, realizing, experimenting and problem solving with work across a variety of mediums. Students also have opportunities to exhibit their work throughout the school year and participate in competitions. We also coordinate trips to the Art Institute and other museums.

- **Drawing:** This medium is at the heart of all Art and Design at our school. In Middle School, students have regular opportunities to use a range of media, materials and processes to create their own work.
- **Painting:** Through painting, students learn how to control oil, acrylic and watercolor paints.
- **Graphic Design:** It's important that students have regular opportunities to work with appropriate hardware and software tools to help acquire and develop the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need to use the principles of graphic design throughout their lives.
- **Textile Design:** Through Textile Design, students learn the practices and procedures of working with textiles, which are widely reflected in contemporary practice in the fine and applied arts.
- **Critical and Contextual Studies:** We value Critical and Contextual Studies in Middle School. Students learn the "major" arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, as well as the "minor" arts of ceramics, furniture making and other decorative objects.
- **Design and Sculpture:** Students use a range of materials to engage with spatial and tactile methods of thinking and working.

Design & Technology

In the Design & Technology (DT) course, students examine the creation of the modern world. They develop artistic and design skills while learning about physics, mechanics, mathematics and engineering principles. Students learn about the design process by completing a range of engaging, practical projects. During each project, students develop an appropriate solution following the Design Cycle Model. DT students learn to be inquisitive learners through experimentation and asking “Why?”. They also learn to recognize what makes design successful and what causes a product to fail. We aim to develop our students into independent learners who are conscious of designers’ effects on the environment and aware of the responsibility this carries when developing a product.

Topics of Study: Year 7

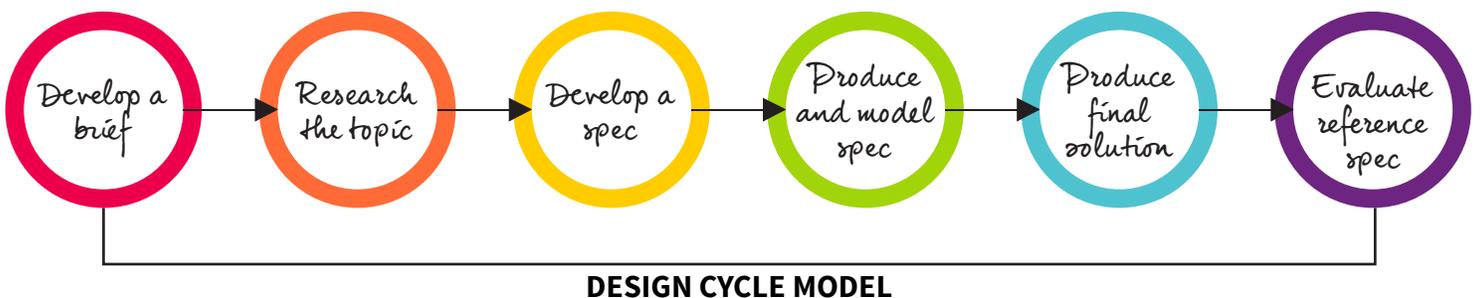
- **Freehand Graphics:** Students learn about the presentation of work, 2D and 3D graphical drawing, as well as shading and development of texture. They also learn how to plan a layout of work.
- **CAD:** In the Computer-Aided Design (CAD) unit, students learn how to develop 3D shapes and use dimensioning and units. Students also explore rendering and material properties as well as rapid prototyping and 3D printing.
- **Jumping Bug:** This unit focuses on the Design Cycle Model and the use of a design matrix. Students develop design ideas, learn how to safely work in a workshop and compare manufacturing with make evolution and testing.

Topics of Study: Year 8

- **Wheeled Vehicle:** The Wheeled Vehicle unit teaches students to work as a team. They dive into mechanisms and mechanical advantage, and work with detailed specification to develop a CAD model. To wrap up the unit, students learn about testing and results tables.
- **Desk Tidy/Phone Holder:** To launch this unit, students learn about the development of a need and use of a decision matrix. Then, they develop design ideas and a CAD model to produce a final product to test and evaluate.
- **Electronics:** Students develop an understanding of how to create circuits using Peripheral Interface Controllers (PIC) and produce a final product.

Topics of Study: Year 9

- **Structures and Forces:** Working as a team, students explore tension, compression and fatigue in materials. They also discover stress and strain, learn how to develop a model and take on testing and evaluation.
- **Advanced CAD:** Students work with sheet materials and develop complex assemblies. They create environmental reports and cover exploded view drawings.
- **Rockets:** In this lively unit, students look at aerodynamics and flight principles in the context of the history and future of space exploration. The unit also covers materials properties, smart materials and evaluation and testing.



Information & Communications Technology

The study of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) is unique because of the ever-changing subject matter, as software evolves at a rapid pace. ICT introduces students to the fundamentals of programming, data analysis and visual design. At our school, Middle School students work under three umbrellas of learning that build in complexity each year: Digital Literacy, Programming, and Digital Design & Graphics. Students learn how and why a task is completed to understand the significance of the practical activities they perform. Learning is based on individual projects, through which students are assessed on their written understanding and practical skills.

Students develop and improve skills through practice. They creatively demonstrate their skills to ensure they can adapt them in real-life situations and build upon previously acquired skills, which encourage confident use of computers and other technology tools. We also discuss related real-world topics such as digital divide and home and leisure. We teach ICT using Windows PCs on platform-independent software, so we can discuss and plan projects with the world's many operating systems in mind.

Topics of Study: Year 7

- **Digital Literacy:** Students explore the fundamentals of ICT, learning how to effectively and responsibly use computers, and the computer skills they'll need in the coming years. They cover topics such as e-safety and spreadsheet modeling.
- **Programming:** Using a variety of software (such as Scratch), students learn to program and create their own computer game using different types of coding.
- **Digital Design & Graphics:** Students learn to design with a computer and use a range of software from Windows Movie Maker to Adobe Photoshop.

Topics of Study: Year 8

- **Digital Literacy:** Students develop their knowledge of Digital Literacy and cover more safety features such as cyber security and the workings of a computer. Students learn how to use databases in Microsoft Access and create their own queries and reports.
- **Programming:** Web development skills are the focus, with students learning how to use HTML and CSS, and creating their own website. They're also exposed to Kodu, a visual programming language, and create their own computer game.
- **Digital Design & Graphics:** While students are learning to create their website, they also learn how to design it and produce web graphics. They use professional software such as Adobe Fireworks and Adobe Photoshop to create buttons, navigation bars and rollover animation.

Topics of Study: Year 9

- **Digital Literacy:** Students continue to learn about databases, preparing them for future Computer Science courses. They take on more advanced learning, like relational databases and SQL, the standard programming language for relational database management systems.
- **Programming:** Students start to look at higher-level programming languages, like Python. They learn how to create "if" statements, loops and arrays. They also learn basic Computer Science skills like flow diagrams and pseudocode.
- **Digital Design & Graphics:** Using industry software like Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Fireworks, students learn to create different graphics and designs.

Athletics



Athletics

At our school, students gain knowledge of personal health and fitness to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The Athletics Department offers a range of physical activities that help them become confident and committed team players. Each week, all Middle School students take part in Physical Education and Games courses, resulting in three hours of physical activity.

Topics of Study

The Athletics Program is designed to give each student the opportunity to explore a variety of activities. Students with medical excuses must have a written letter from a parent or a physician for prolonged circumstances.

- Badminton
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cricket
- Dance
- Gymnastics
- Health and skill-related fitness
- Indoor rowing
- Outdoor and Adventurous Activities (OAA)
- Paralympic sports
- Parkour
- Pickeball
- Pop lacrosse
- Rounders'
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Track & Field
- Volleyball
- Yoga

Extracurricular Sports

Students may also participate in the sports clubs below. We are a member of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA), and our teams compete against schools across the Chicago area, including other private schools such as Lycée Français de Chicago, Francis Parker, Chicago City Day School, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Near North Montessori School, Urban Prairie Waldorf School and Catherine Cook School. Our sports teams are open to all students and require a high level of commitment to training and fixtures.

Competitive Sports

Autumn Term September- October	Winter Term 1 November-December	Winter Term 2 December-February	Spring Term 1 February-April	Spring Term 2 May-June
Boys Soccer	Boys Basketball	Boys Basketball	Boys Volleyball	Boys Volleyball
Girls Volleyball	Girls Basketball	Girls Basketball	Girls Soccer	Girls Soccer
Cross Country	Badminton	Futsal	Track & Field	Track & Field
Tennis			Tennis	Tennis
Golf			Golf	Golf
Rowing			Swimming	Swimming
			Water Polo	Rowing
			Rowing	

Noncompetitive Sports

Autumn Term September- October	Winter Term 1 November-December	Winter Term 2 December-February	Spring Term 1 February-April	Spring Term 2 May-June
Basketball	Basketball	Basketball	Basketball	Basketball
Badminton	Gymnastics	Gymnastics	Lacrosse	Rounders
Rugby	Futsal	Handball	Field Hockey	Cricket
Dance	Dodgeball	Dodgeball	Dance	Dance
OAA	Dance	Dance	OAA	Rugby
Fitness Suite	Fitness Suite	OAA	Rugby	Pickleball
Netball	Netball	Fitness Suite	Fitness Suite	Fitness Suite
		Netball	Netball	

Assessment



Assessment

Purpose of Assessment

Assessment is the gathering and analysis of information about student performance. It identifies what students know, understand, can do and feel at different stages in the learning process; this information guides teachers in instruction. Assessment is an ongoing and daily part of school life, and the formative comments students receive develop their understanding of the skills and knowledge required to be successful in each course. At BISC South Loop, the aims and purpose of assessment are to:

- Provide information to enhance and improve learning and teaching.
- Provide information for target-setting for individuals, groups and cohorts.
- Share learning goals with students.
- Involve students in self-assessment.
- Help students know and recognize the standards they're aiming for.
- Raise standards of learning.
- Identify children for intervention.
- Inform parents of their son/daughter's progress.
- Complete a critical self-evaluation of the school.
- Measure progress and value added.

Setting Targets

Regardless of previous academic achievement, students are expected to make appropriate progress and continually improve. Our teachers are highly trained in estimating and setting academic targets that challenge student learning. Students join the Middle School with assessments that detail previous academic achievements. Teachers use these assessments to set challenging, yet achievable academic targets. Middle School students usually achieve short-term targets by each academic report and long-term targets by the end of the school year or by the end of Middle School. We continually track and monitor the academic achievements of every student in every subject to ensure they're reaching their goals. Students also reflect on their academic achievement during every lesson and after homework assignments and assessments. If a teacher identifies a student whose progress is slowing, the school administers an individual learning plan to help ensure the student is back on track by the next academic report.

Academic Reports

Academic reports describe students' academic and social development and list targets in all subjects for the student to concentrate on before the next report. Teachers communicate with families about student achievement and progress in four academic reports:

1. October Half-Term
2. Beginning of January
3. Before Spring Break
4. Beginning of June

There are parent consultations with teachers scheduled during the school year. Parents may also meet with teachers outside of the consultation dates.

*Advisory and
Community
Time*



Advisory and Community Time

Advisory

Every Middle School student is part of an Advisory group, led by a teacher (Advisor), that meets weekly to provide students with an opportunity to interact with peers in a structured and supervised environment, but outside of academic lessons. It's also a chance for students to receive mentoring and guidance from their Advisor. Students follow a planned program of social and emotional learning that helps them acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to manage their lives now and in the future. The wide-ranging curriculum prepares students to manage the most critical opportunities, challenges and responsibilities they will face and helps them connect and apply the knowledge they gain in all school subjects to practical, real-life situations.

Advisory Learning Areas

Health

healthy lifestyles; healthy eating and exercise; mental and emotional health; sex and relationships education; drug, alcohol and tobacco education



Career Choices

enterprise, business and finance



Managing Risk

financial and career choices; personal safety; Internet safety and violent incidents



Loss

bereavement, separation and divorce



Relationships

developing and maintaining positive relationships; dealing with negative relationships, which may include bullying and sexual violence



Personal Finance

savings, debt and budgeting



Change

managing transition, adversity and developing resilience



Service Learning

volunteering, civic responsibility



Community Time

Secondary students take part in Community Time on Wednesday afternoons. Community Time prepares them for life after BISC South Loop by supporting their holistic development through varied activities, such as field trips directly related to their studies. There are also leadership opportunities, in-school workshops and numerous community service initiatives.

Questions?

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