



2017-2018

Middle School Curriculum Guide

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Mission

The IDEAL School of Manhattan is an inclusion school dedicated to creating a diverse community that affirms and accepts the full identities of all people, while inspiring academic excellence, creative leadership, and a desire to build a more just and equitable world.

Honor Code

This Honor Code summarizes but does not replace the community standards and rules for students set forth in The IDEAL School Family Handbook. It is comprised of five essential rules and responsibilities to guide each community member to serve the school's mission and to participate in the creation of an inclusive and respectful community, in and out of the classroom, where all members have the opportunity to strive for excellence, demonstrate creative leadership, and work together to build a more just and equitable world.

The Five I's of IDEAL

1. I will be respectful of the learning process, strive for excellence in and out of the classroom, and engage respectfully in all school classes, programs, and activities.
2. I will act with integrity and represent myself and my work honestly.
3. I will ensure that my words and actions demonstrate respect for all and acceptance of the full identity of all individuals that make up our diverse community.
4. I will strive to ensure that my actions, my work, and my words help to create a more inclusive community and a more just and equitable world.
5. I will be a creative and compassionate leader by modeling IDEAL's core values both in and out of school.

The Arts

Through the robust arts curriculum of The IDEAL School of Manhattan, students develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and confidence, and they learn to take healthy risks as they explore multiple perspectives and strengthen their own thinking. The skills students acquire in the Arts strengthen their learning in all academic areas. Partnerships with New York City outreach programs and cultural institutions extend classroom experiences and create a vibrant curriculum that is integrated throughout all disciplines.

During the first semester, all sixth grade students participate in one art, one music, and one drama class each week, and they also gather together for a fourth period of interdisciplinary arts programming on a weekly basis. In the second semester, sixth grade students choose one arts elective on which to focus. As seventh and eighth graders, all students choose one elective per semester.

Note: Arts electives are subject to change based on faculty and student interest and schedule.

Music Electives

Foundations of Musical Performance (Grade 6, first semester)

This introductory course serves as a transition from general music into music performance ensembles and larger groups. Students learn procedures in areas of the performing arts that ready them to adapt to performance ensembles in grades seven and eight. Students study proper vocal production, incorporating proper breathing, vocal warm-ups, singing in tune and pitch matching through the Kodály Method, sight reading music with emphasis on musical literacy, and beginner Music Theory.

Interdisciplinary Music Appreciation (Grades 6-8)

Drawing from their knowledge in other subjects, personal life experiences, heritage, and viewpoints, students explore how music is both a product as well as influencer of culture. Students learn how to appreciate music as a musician--applying musical language to evaluate aesthetic and performative aspects of music--and also as an ethnomusicologist--drawing connections between cultural implications and influences of music they enjoy.

Instrumental Exploration (Grades 6-8)

Applying their growing expertise as music appreciators, students engage in ear training and performance with a variety of melodic and rhythmic instruments. Students learn rudiments of written music as well as become practitioners of oral musical traditions from around the world.

Choral Ensemble (Grades 6-8)

The Choral Ensemble is a performing group that has regular practice in musical literacy, theory, proper vocal techniques, and the creation of a blended group sound. The ensemble performs diverse choral works seasonally and for special events.

Theatre

Theatre Arts Foundations (Grade 6, first semester)

In this course, students explore the fundamentals of the art of Drama. Students generate daily journals and participate in discussions about their submissions. Additionally, students collaborate on group scenes which may include pantomime, improvisation, and tableaux.

Theatre for Social Change (Grades 6-8)

“Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.” - Augusto Boal

Theatre can create social and personal change, and it can be innovative and can contribute to learning. In this semester, students uncover the radical roots of the theatre in education, and they utilize the tools and techniques of Augusto Boal’s interactive and participatory “Theatre of the Oppressed” and Brecht’s “Epic Theatre” to research, create, and practice a piece of Theatre for presentation.

Actors’ Lab (Grades 6-8)

Actors’ Lab gives students the opportunity to accomplish the best on-camera presentations. In this course, students participate in performance-based and functional activities dedicated to compelling works for the screen. The classroom is equipped with cameras, microphones, softbox lighting, set pieces, and props for student use. Students film scenes, practice multi-camera shooting activities, and work as a group to compose original short films. This course challenges students to explore their creative identity, hone their energy, and express their presence to the camera. Furthermore, students gain knowledge and practice in multiple film crew responsibilities to support the actors presenting their scenes.

Comedy Workshop (Grades 6-8)

Introduction to Comedy gives students the opportunity to celebrate humor in all its forms. In this course, students are exposed to variations of improvisation and parody and receive instruction on delivery and physicality. Additionally, students explore literary works by some of the great comedic playwrights of the twentieth century, such as Neil Simon, Mary Chase, Edward Albee, and Eugene O’Neill. Students also collaborate to develop original scenes and characters.

Visual Art

Foundations of Visual Art (Grade 6, first semester)

This course offers sixth grade artists a foundation in Visual Arts and cultivates specific habits of mind important to the discipline of visual art, including reflection, engagement, persistence, self-expression, observation, exploration, and understanding. Artists survey a range of media, with exposure to traditional and contemporary applications. By the end of the year, students are able to identify and apply the elements and principles of design to visual artwork. Artists acquire techniques for a range of media and demonstrate proper care, storage, and use of high quality tools and materials. This course develops students' visual fluency, ability to communicate meaning through materials, and understanding of the principles of design. Students practice mark-making, hue, and value. The course culminates in the annual ArtBeat body of work show.

Form and Figure (Grades 6-8)

Form and Figure is a course that explores sculpture and drawing. Unit one provides an introduction to sculpture techniques, materials, and practices. Students work with materials such as found objects, clay, soapstone, wooden dowels, balsa wood, and cardboard, and they create installations, relief sculptures, and sculptures in full round. In unit two, students learn to create depth in drawing through value and perspective. Artists work with media such as pastels, sepia chalk, charcoal, pencil, india ink, and pen and ink, and they maintain a sketchbook to cultivate the habit of drawing daily.

Composition and Color (Grades 6-8)

Students explore the storytelling power of composition and color through an exploration of printmaking, collage, and painting. In the printmaking unit, students explore composition in terms of negative and positive space, light and shadow, balance, and repetition. Students create prints with media such as wood, styrofoam, linoleum, and silkscreens. In the painting unit, students explore painting bases, media, and tools as they practice the foundational techniques and processes of this art form. Students work with media such as watercolor, gouache, and acrylic paint; learn to identify and prepare primary colors, secondary colors, and tertiary colors; and become skilled in identifying and applying color relationships such as complimentary and analogous colors.

STEAM

IDEAL's STEAM Lab provides a space where students are encouraged to draw interdisciplinary connections, to create original work, and to explore new forms of self-expression, communication, and problem-solving. All Middle School students are scheduled to spend time in the STEAM Lab during study halls and Learning Center periods. Equipment in the STEAM Lab includes a green screen and digital cameras, 3D printers, robotics equipment, iPads and computers for programming, a sewing machine, and a variety of other tools to spark the creativity and cultivate the skills of students.

STEAM After-School Program

Middle School students at The IDEAL School of Manhattan can participate in the FIRST®LEGO®League (FLL) program. Participants in this program compete in the FLL qualifier tournament. Each Challenge has three parts: the Robot Game, the Project, and the Core Values. Students will work as a team to program an autonomous robot to score points on a themed playing field, develop a solution to a problem they identify, and be able to articulate and model team core values.

English Department

The English Department cultivates voice, develops analytical reading skills, and encourages students to work towards comfort and proficiency in writing in a variety of genres. The department emphasizes process as well as product, making drafting and revision a routine part of our students' experience at IDEAL. Grammar, vocabulary, and spelling are grounded in and reinforced by the study of literature and writing assignments. By seventh grade, students compose and workshop rough drafts of essays or personal or creative writing assignments on a bi-weekly basis, and students strengthen their editing skills through a guided peer review process. Classes attend plays or other cultural events in conjunction with their study of literature and explore connections between literature and life throughout their studies.

English 6: As students transition to Middle School, their study of spelling, vocabulary, paragraph structure, and grammar is integrated into their thematic study of literature and ongoing opportunities to cultivate their voice and style as writers. Students solidify their knowledge of parts of speech and idiomatic expression and review how to construct and punctuate grammatically correct sentences. In conjunction with their study of literature, students learn to craft personal, creative, persuasive, and comparative writing pieces. Students are introduced to the formal writing process, including brainstorming, planning, drafting, editing, and sharing. The themes of supernatural, good vs. evil, jealousy, vengeance, mortality, and immortality connect the literature in sixth grade. Texts include works such as *The Giver*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *The Lightning Thief*, and a selection of Greek myths, but choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. Through reading, students will learn to identify literary elements such as plot, setting, conflict, theme, character development, and tone. Historical fiction and traditional literature receive particular focus. Assessments will derive from students' reading, writing, and class discussion.

English 7: In seventh grade English, reading, writing, and language skills continue to be major areas of concentration, and all aspects of this course focuses on foundational critical and inferential thinking skills. Through the study of various texts, students focus on themes of coming of age, identity, and friendship and apply

their skills by evaluating various points of view. Texts include works such as *Hatchet*, *Holes*, *Crash*, *Treasure Island*, *True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, and *Walk Two Moons*, but choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. In their writing, students work on developing familiarity with the formal stages of writing. Emphasis is placed on editing and peer review. Students will compose personal, creative, persuasive, and comparative pieces. Grammar and usage instruction is embedded within writing units and students focus on subject-verb agreement as well as pronoun-antecedent agreement. Assessments derive from students' reading, writing, and class discussion.

English 8: English 8 continues to develop students' reading, writing, and language skills. Eighth-grade students develop their analytical skills by reading a variety of novels and plays. Students study how to evaluate literary criticism and how to incorporate secondary source material. As a part of the research process, students learn to utilize MLA guidelines, format, and citations. Literature emphasizes themes of injustice, integrity, prejudice, and self-assertion. Texts include works such as *The Outsiders*, *Of Mice and Men*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Bomb*, but choices each year are based in part on student interest and input. When writing, students manipulate their phrasing and sentence structure to convey precise ideas fluidly, applying transitional devices and cohesive organization. By the end of year, students have developed their voice and craft as writers by composing personal narratives, poetry, argumentative essays, and a research paper. Assessments will derive from students' reading, writing, and class discussion.

History Department

The History Department at IDEAL emphasizes historical thinking, research, and writing skills as students study World and American history through a variety of contrasting lenses. Debate and discussion are featured heavily in classes that cultivate student voice and opinion through examination of various viewpoints, even as students develop their foundational knowledge of the subject matter.

History 6: Cultural Anthropology

This course explores the concept of culture, seeking to understand what aspects are shared between all people on earth and also to celebrate the great diversity of human cultures. The year begins with a project that shows how geography affects cultural development. By researching a particular biome in the world and imagining that they must survive in that environment (after a plane crash in which no one was

hurt), the students create societies – shelters, economies, and governments - which are integrally connected to the environment. In this way, the students understand how cultural development is essentially tied to geography and how all cultures try to meet their basic human needs in a particular environment. We will also look at what happens when cultures mix and share ideas, looking at the rich cultural diversity of New York City and celebrating the particular cultural heritage of our students. With this understanding of culture, the class will then look more in depth at the specific cultural trait of religion, understanding the basic beliefs of the major religions of the world.

History 7: American History

While most United States History courses begin with the arrival the Europeans, this class begins the history of America with understanding the cultures of the continent's original inhabitants. By looking at the cultures of the Lenape of the Northeast Temperate Forest, the Hopi of Southwest Desert, the Inuit of the Alaskan Arctic, and the Sioux of the Great Plains, we will explore the cultural heritage of these groups and how it relates to their geographic location. We will then look at the arrival of the Europeans to the continent by looking specifically at the impact of their settlement on indigenous cultures. The students will also study how these small colonies became the United States of America by exploring the conflict between the United States and Great Britain. Once the new country has been established, the students will look at how our early government worked and how it evolved into what it is today, examining in more depth the workings of our government today.

History 8: Global History 1

This world history course explores the development of ancient civilizations in Eurasia, starting with the Neolithic Revolution in Mesopotamia and spreading out along the east/west latitude to Egypt, Persia, India, and China. We begin by focusing on the dawn of humanity and exploring the factors that made cities and civilizations possible. The central question of our research is: why certain hunter-gatherer communities developed into conquering empires while others remained hunter-gatherers that were conquered? We explore these roots of modern inequality by looking at the theory of Jared Diamond in his book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, which places the ultimate cause of inequality in Ancient Mesopotamia. After exploring the ultimate cause of inequality, we will see how the Neolithic Revolution leads to the rise of more complex societies with developed economies, social hierarchies, and political institutions and examines the benefits and problems associated with maintaining such institutions. Students will also study the birth of some of the major religions in the world – Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Skills student will learn

this year will focus on analyzing the causes and effects of major events as well comparing and contrasting differing belief systems, perspectives, social policies, and political systems.

The Learning Center

The Learning Center is the hub of academic life at IDEAL. It provides a comfortable space for one-to-one and small group work where experienced faculty and learning specialists expand upon typical classroom instruction by providing additional support, enrichment, and resources such as book clubs and study skill classes. Each student's individual schedule provides time throughout the school day, one to three times per week, to visit the Learning Center in order to address specific academic needs. Students are also encouraged to visit the Learning Center or to schedule an appointment to explore resources or clarify work they are currently studying. The work of The Learning Center is overseen by an experienced Speech Pathologist and staffed by a Learning Specialist and supported by a variety of faculty members who are available to work one on one and in small groups with students. The Learning Center Coordinator also serves as a resource to faculty members, meeting with teachers to gather resources for projects, to support differentiation, and to develop student-centered or technology-based learning activities.

Interview Skills

An interview skills class is offered to assist students in developing strong interviewing and interpersonal skills. It is taught in The Learning Center by a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist. The class is designed to address, review, and practice the rules and usage of language; staying on topic, interpretation, asking and responding to questions, processing of information, practicing of nonverbal communication, use of appropriate language, etc. Class size ranges from four to six students who are in good academic standing in the High School and are strong candidates to represent The IDEAL School of Manhattan and its mission. The class is held during the fall, one time per week for six weeks.

Public Speaking

Students in this elective for eighth graders learn how to craft and deliver persuasive speeches, how-to speeches, and personal narratives. They practice performing published monologues and speaking with and without a script. In addition, students create original IDEALTalks and learn through critique how to strengthen their presentations. Students practice their skills and perform their work in assemblies, class meetings, and a poetry recitation contest and will work together as a group to workshop the IDEALTalks of eighth graders.

Let's Chat

A Let's Chat group is offered to sixth graders to assist in strengthening different areas centered around social skills. It is taught in The Learning Center by a licensed

Speech-Language Pathologist. The class is designed to support students specifically in exploring conversational skills, academic skills, relationship skills, conflict management skills, and emotional communication skills.

Mathematics Department

The Mathematics Department strives to foster in all students an understanding of foundational and algebraic mathematical functions that order our world. Math classes encourage critical thinking, creative and collaborative problem solving, and authentic connections between the curriculum and our world. Students are assessed annually to be sure they are progressing at an appropriately challenging and supportive pace. Students begin the curriculum as appropriate for their readiness level and progress at their own pace, regardless of grade level.

Foundational Math 1

Foundational Math 1 is designed to enhance students' basic math skills. Students gain an understanding of the number system, place value, and operation of numbers that do not involve regrouping. Students learn how to measure and compare, an important life skill that encompasses the concepts of length, weight, temperature, time, and money. Students also begin to classify shapes based on their properties. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

Foundational Math 2

Foundational Math 2 reinforces and builds upon skills mastered in Foundational Math 1. Students expand their knowledge of the number system and operational skills, and they begin to solve addition and subtraction problems that require regrouping. They are also introduced to multiplication and division. Students use their skills to plan a party, create shopping lists, and calculate a budget. Students also expand their knowledge of fractions and learn to add and subtract fractions with common denominators. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

Foundational Math 3

Foundational Math 3 reinforces and builds upon skills mastered in Foundational Math 2. Students expand their knowledge of the number systems and operational skills. They begin to solve multi-digit multiplication and learn the steps in long division. They will ultimately use fractions to prepare baked goods for a school-wide bake sale. Students will build upon their knowledge of fractions by adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing fractions with different denominators. Finally, students are introduced to decimals and perform calculations with decimals. Throughout the year, they complete projects to apply math concepts to real-life applications.

Prealgebra Fundamentals

Prealgebra Fundamentals builds on the Prealgebra foundation students have developed in Grade 6 and further prepares them for Algebra I. Additionally, students continue their introduction to simple geometric concepts and situations. Students in this class work towards proficiency in understanding and applying proportional relationships; understanding operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations; solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume; and drawing inferences about populations based on samples.

Prealgebra

In this course, students hone their skills and strategies for basic operations with whole numbers and will also extend these operations for use with integers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. Students gain experience with square roots and exponents through class discussions and guided problem solving. Working with variables in expressions, equations, inequalities allows students to develop skills in manipulating algebraic expressions, and these skills help students solve word problems by modeling and serve students well as they are introduced to graphing linear and basic quadratic functions. Geometry is covered and explored through hands-on projects that allow students to gain experience with how dilations, tessellations, and similar figures form part of their everyday life experiences. The topics covered in the course allow students to approach Algebra 1 equipped with the necessary skill set for learning algebra.

Algebra 1

In Algebra 1, students develop the skills, knowledge, and vocabulary necessary to perform, express, and communicate mathematical ideas and to solve real world-focused problems using algebra. Students develop algorithms for solving and simplifying expressions, equations, and inequalities. Students work with linear and quadratic functions, both as equations and as visual graphs that they create to model their thinking. Through discussions and guided activities, students explore exponents, both positive and negative, and learn how these ideas relate to many areas of study outside of mathematics, such as finance and games. Students also learn techniques for factoring polynomials and practice using online graphing applications and TI-83/84 Calculators to assist them in their work.

Algebra 2

This course builds upon topics learned in Algebra I and introduces new topics such as direct and inverse variation, higher degree polynomial functions, exponential and logarithmic functions, and inverse functions. Students examine patterns in the transformation of functions in depth and explore irrational and complex numbers, conic sections, sequences and series, permutations, combinations, and probability. Trigonometric functions, including their graphs and identities, are also covered, starting with the Unit Circle.

Physical Education and Health

IDEAL's Health and Physical Education programs are integral aspects of our curriculum as we recognize and honor the connection between healthy bodies and minds. Because research supports the connection among physical activity, learning, and concentration, physical education classes meet four days a week at IDEAL. IDEAL's Physical Education Department emphasizes collaboration, team spirit, and effort, in addition to encouraging a lifelong appreciation for physical fitness. Health classes are taught each year in order to present students with a forum for discussion and to tailor conversations to developmental needs.

Physical Education

The PE curriculum serves to hone students' fundamental skills in team sports while still recognizing the need for physical activity with regard to healthy living. Units are focused on not only learning how to play sports but also learning about how to be part of a team. Interfaced through all units are various fitness days and activities so the students will remain active. Students will learn why it is important to stay active and the positive effects it has in the present and future.

Health

IDEAL's school-wide health curriculum is based largely on the guidelines of The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS). Key concepts of the curriculum include human development, relationships, personal skills (decision making, communication, negotiation), and sexuality (behavior, health, society, and culture). Lessons, discussions, and readings are undertaken in developmentally appropriate ways. Some lessons will occur in smaller groups. The curriculum also delves into the world of health and the importance of practicing good health both in and outside of school. We look at the importance of practicing good nutrition, the world of mental health, peer relationships and much more.

Science Department

IDEAL's Science Department is dedicated to creating an inquiry-based Integrated Science curriculum that develops students' foundational knowledge of Earth, Life and Physical Sciences. By nurturing techniques in experimental design, and problem solving through scientific method, students develop the critical thinking skills necessary to question and comprehend our natural and technological environments.

Science 6: Integrated Science

Through inquiry-based learning, sixth grade scientists begin their journey with an exploration of the scientific method and its application to real world challenges. Students are

encouraged to question and analyze their physical world by learning basic investigative skills like using a microscope or tabulating data through grids and charts. Our newest Middle Schoolers develop research skills using textbooks and credible websites, teaching students to evaluate a variety sources in this age of information overload. Curriculum is varied to build foundations of knowledge in Earth, Life, and Physical Science. Topics include Geography, Cells and Systems, Measurement using Metric System, Building Microscope Skills, and Fun Physics. Students cultivate independent study skills by organizing a Science Notebook and learn to work in small teams to prepare and present conclusions to their scientific inquiry.

Science 7: Integrated Science

Seventh grade science scholars begin this course with a review of scientific method and assessment of science skills, including microscope use and comprehensive note-taking. Students learn to research and gather evidence while presenting new ideas and drawing conclusions. With an emphasis on Life Science that includes Biology and Chemistry, young scientists begin to study concepts of Evolution and Taxonomy, constructing a Geological Timeline to display at our Science Expo. Beginning with the Big Bang Theory, students learn through experimentation and dissection how all living things are connected and created from the same “star dust.” Topics include Taxonomy, Big Bang vs. Creation Theories, Evolution, Atomic Theory, and Astronomy.

Science 8: Integrated Science

In their final year of Middle School, eighth grade scientists apply their research, organizational, and design skills to projects and lab activities that build confidence in scientific investigation. Using scientific method to explain data, students build evidence of understanding through their Science Notebooks, oral presentations, and group projects such as Biosphere III. Students are encouraged to build critical thinking skills and to master experimental design as they formulate inquiry-based projects for our Science Expo. With a focus on Biochemistry, the course covers topics including Matter & the Universe, The Periodic Table & Carbon Atom, Nutrition Studies, Endocrinology, and Molecular Reactions. Students are introduced to Physics concepts of force, motion, energy, and optics, as they prepare for high school and university courses that require in-depth research and content retention.

Global Language Department

Through the study of global languages at IDEAL, students gain confidence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in the target language, and they develop an appreciation for the diverse cultures and communities of native speakers. The arts and experiential learning infuse the curriculum as students explore the rich history of the culture they are studying within New York City and across the globe and apply their knowledge in creative ways. All IDEAL students are required to study one global language during their middle school years, with the

exception of cases where the family, student, learning specialist, and school agree that additional support in foundational literacy skills or therapies would be beneficial.

Spanish

Introductory Spanish

This introductory Spanish class provides basic reading, writing, and speaking skills to new students while challenging those who already have some foundational skills. Throughout the year, study of the culture of Spanish speaking countries and communities builds students' understanding of Spanish speaking people and their customs. Each unit is organized in three major blocks: Linguistics, Culture, and Projects. Upon completion, students comprehend and respond with grammatical accuracy to both spoken and written Spanish prompts and are able to demonstrate their cultural awareness. The class subject matter and textbook, *Santillana*, provides students with fun and exciting challenges. Sixth grade Spanish students work on a countries project which requires them to research and present key aspects of their nation's history, culture, climate, and traditions.

Spanish 1 (Grades 7 and 8):

Spanish 1 is a two year course that provides daily opportunities for students to continue to develop the fundamental elements of the Spanish language within a cultural context. Emphasis on listening, understanding, responding, reading, and developing written skills is the primary focus of this class. Students learn and practice using practical vocabulary on topics such as school, family, home, community, animals, sports, transportation, travel, and more. The class is taught largely in Spanish to allow students to practice conversational skills. Upon completion, students are able comprehend and respond with grammatical accuracy to both spoken and written Spanish as well demonstrate their cultural awareness with more confidence. Throughout the year, students travel to cultural events, art exhibits, shops, and restaurants to expose them to the rich Latino culture within New York City.

Leadership, Service Learning, and Social Justice

Working in concert with the pedagogy and the academic curriculum, the leadership, service learning, and social justice programs at IDEAL foster the social and emotional development of confident and compassionate young people who are able to advocate for themselves and

others; possess the self-awareness to take healthy risks that lead to growth; and are prepared to contribute their voice and talents to a more just and equitable society.

Advisory

Every Middle School student is a member of an advisory group, and every advisory group is led by a faculty member who looks after the academic, social, and emotional growth of the individuals and the group as a whole. Advisory groups gather briefly in scheduled times at the beginning and end of each day to touch base and to strengthen the sense of community before delving into academic classes. Advisory groups also meet at least once and often twice over the course of each week for guided discussions on topics related to friendship, advocacy, and growth mindset. It is the role of the advisor to know each student as an individual and as a learner and to support the academic and personal growth of each student on a daily basis and in more strategic ways over the course of the year. The advisor serves as the first point of contact and as a partner for parents so that the school and families act in concert to support each child in achieving his or her full potential.

Service Learning

The Middle School selects and discusses one issue to focus on throughout the year. Through facilitated discussions, guest speakers on the topic, two days of service, and partnerships with non-profit organizations, students are provided with opportunities to learn more about the issue and those it impacts through direct civic engagement. Service learning experiences are carefully scaffolded with intentional preparation and reflection, encouraging students to strengthen their understanding of their role in creating a more just and equitable community.

Social Justice Curriculum

IDEAL's anti-bias and multicultural values are woven into the fabric of our curriculum and school. We support each student's positive identity and attitude development by directly addressing the impact of stereotyping, bias, and discriminatory behavior, encouraging cooperative learning, and teaching conflict resolution. Students compare multiple perspectives in all of their classes as they develop empathy, voice, and self-advocacy skills. Social justice topics are also woven into the fabric of the advisory program. An inclusive education provides students with an excellent academic foundation and empowers them to succeed in a truly diverse society with self-confidence, acceptance, and compassion.

Eighth Grade Civil Rights Journey and Capstone Project

Students engage in this Civil Rights Journey to the South in the spring of their eighth grade year as a capstone to their study of civil rights issues and activists throughout their Middle School years. To prepare for the trip, each student selects an area of interest to research, which students will then document and blog about when they visit related sites. Over the course of this multi-day trip, students travel to places such as Alabama, Georgia, and/or Atlanta, where they will have opportunities to stand in the places where history happened, walk in the shoes of America's civil rights leaders, and speak to those who were involved.

Doing so will strengthen students' experience and understanding of our country's history, as well as what it means to be powerful agents of social change, to a higher level. Finally, upon returning, students work in groups to create documentary films synthesizing themes from their experiences. These films are shown in a final teach-in before the students complete their Middle School experience at IDEAL.