

PLEASANT HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Program of Studies
2020-21



ADMINISTRATION:

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Mission Statement

Students are the primary focus of the West Jefferson Hills School District where, in partnership with families and community, the mission is to educate and prepare all students to become active, contributing members of society by providing a challenging, innovative educational program guided by an exceptional staff in a safe, positive, caring environment, all of which promote excellence.

Vision Statement

In the West Jefferson Hills School District, we advocate for our students by providing instruction that enables them to achieve high academic standards, and by developing relationships with them, their families, and each other that create caring, safe schools where students are valued.

- Our students all achieve high academic standards.
- Our student achievement of high standards includes curricular, artistic, vocational, athletic, and extra-curricular goals.
- We coordinate curriculum across and between grade levels, programs, and buildings.
- Our students are active learners.
- We recognize documented teacher observation over time as an effective form of student assessment.
- Our staff members are highly qualified and maintain their excellence through continued professional growth.
- We partner with higher education.
- Our district's staff members relate to students, their families, and each other in ways that convey compassion, understanding, respect, and interest.
- We honor the traditions of our past: academic, athletic, and extra-curricular.
- Our facilities are of a quality and nature that support and encourage district programs and goals.
- Our community understands and supports our district's programs and goals.
- We accept our role in the economic growth and well-being of our community.

Belief Statements

We Believe:

- The learning and the educational development of individuals are collaborative efforts involving student, family, school and community.
- High expectations promote high achievement.
- Individuals are responsible for their actions.
- The family is a primary influence and motivator for the student.
- Students are the primary focus of the school system.
- Everyone learns at different rates and in different ways.
- All students have an equal opportunity for an education in which they are encouraged to develop their potential.
- Effective learning takes place in a safe, positive and caring environment where respect for others is demonstrated.
- Education involves an interdisciplinary process.
- Learning involves acquiring basic academic knowledge, skills and the ability to analyze, interpret, apply, synthesize and evaluate.
- Education provides skills to enable all students to participate in a lifelong process of learning in a changing world.
- Quality education includes activities inside and outside of the classroom.

- An effective educational program requires giving an exceptional staff a voice in the educational process and providing them with consistent and planned professional development opportunities.
- Advancements in technologies impact knowledge and education.
- Quality public education is essential for a thriving community and requires shared fiscal responsibility.
- Effective communication among school, family, students and community is vital throughout the educational process.
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Core Values

Personal Core Values

Empathy – Our commitment is to listen deeply before jumping to conclusions. We will work to understand first.

We will seek first to understand before being understood...

Respect – Our commitment is to earn the respect of others by building trust, honoring differences, and celebrating diversity. We are in this together!

We will expect the best of others by treating them the way we would want to be treated...

Integrity – Our commitment is model high moral behavior by being honest, fair, and forthcoming with ALL our interactions.

We will do the right thing AND we will do things right...

District Core Values

Personalization/Customization System – We believe that the future of education will be characterized by a customized and highly personalized system where the instructional methodologies are optimized for the needs of each learner.

Every learner, every day

Learner Centric Focus – Decisions about people, policies, practices, and structures are decided by focusing on what is best for the learners.

Keeping Learners First

Fostering Positive Relationships – We know positive relationships have the power to unleash untapped potential in people.

Honoring and Affirming Others

additional novels, both fiction and non-fiction for the 25 book challenge, the school-wide unit and/or the Great Books Challenge. Students will also use Study Sync Resources as part of the Reading Curriculum Pilot Program.

Grade Level 7

Reading

Full Year

In seventh grade, students will analyze, define, compare, evaluate, and interpret ideas when reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students will use close reading strategies to aid in their comprehension skills. Students will learn to annotate as they read to keep focused and actively involved with the text. They will analyze how themes in fiction and nonfiction develop over the course of a book or text. Students will be able to determine two or more central ideas in text. They will cite specific evidence when answering text based questions and support their own points in writing and speaking. Students will learn to make connections between Text to self, Text to text, Text to world, and Text to media. Making connections is a strategy that can assist in making meaning from a text. Learning these concepts will help students be confident readers. Seventh grade students may read the following novels: *Fever 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story About Brain Science* by John Flisichman, and *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen. In addition, students will read additional novels, both fiction and non-fiction for the 25 book challenge, outside reading projects, and the school-wide unit. Students will also use Pearson's My Perspectives Resources as part of the Reading Curriculum Pilot Program.

Grade Level 8

Reading

Full Year

In eighth grade reading, students engage in the study of literature with the goal of becoming lifelong critical readers and writers. Guided by the PA Common Core English Language Arts Standards for Eighth Grade, they interact with a wide variety of texts and genres. Both fiction and nonfiction stories, poems, and articles are selected from the McDougal Littell text, *The Language of Literature*. In addition, students read, analyze, and respond to several novels, as well as many selections of informational text. Students are challenged and encouraged to read 25 books outside of class throughout the school year, increasing the amount of nonfiction each year. Eighth grade students may read the following novels: *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *The Raven*, *Tell-Tale Heart*, and *The Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe (Short Stories), and *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes. Through student-centered instruction, our students are actively engaged in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and presenting. A great deal of analytic and inferential skills are focussed on at the 8th grade level amongst various texts. Evidence-Based writing and discussions are visited in every unit covered. In addition, students will read additional novels, both fiction and non-fiction for the 25 book challenge, the school-wide unit and/or the Great Books Challenge. Students will also use Amplify Resources as part of the Reading Curriculum Pilot Program.

Grade Level 6, 7, and 8

Reading Intervention

Full Year

Students requiring additional support to develop reading skills are scheduled for the Reading Intervention Program. Students assigned to the Reading Intervention class will work with the building Reading Specialist four-five days a week for an entire school year. Students will participate in a reading intervention program along with literature circles, book reviews, and collaborative work sessions analyzing texts.

MATHEMATICS

Grade 6

Mathematics

Full Year

In sixth grade, students will focus on five main areas: The Number System, Ratios and Proportional Relationships, Expressions and Equations, Geometry, Statistics and Probability. Students will build on knowledge of multiplication and division to divide fractions by fractions. Computing with multi-digit numbers fluently will assist in finding common factors and multiples. Students will extend their knowledge of ordering whole numbers to all rational numbers, which will include negative numbers. They will be using ordered pairs, including negative numbers to locate and plot points on a graph. The students will use ratio language to describe ratio relationships,

finding the unit rate and solving unit rate problems, constructing tables of equivalent ratios, and finding missing values. Students will be writing, interpreting, and using expressions and equations that correspond to a given situation, evaluating expressions and using expressions and formulas to solve problems. Properties of operations will be used to rewrite equivalent forms. This would include solving one-variable equations and inequalities and being able to represent and analyze quantitative relationships between dependent and independent variables. Real-world and mathematical problems involving area, surface area, and volume will be taught. Building on and reinforcing their understanding of numbers, students begin to develop their ability to think statistically by displaying, analyzing, and summarizing numerical data sets.

Grade 7 **Mathematics** **Full Year**

In seventh grade, students will focus on five main areas: The Number System, Ratios and Proportional Relationships, Expressions and Equations, Geometry, Statistics and Probability. We will extend the use of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of rational numbers to solve real-world and mathematical problems. The concept of ratios and proportions will be used to solve various types of percent problems. Students will be asked to calculate discounts, interest, taxes, tips, and percent of increase and/ or decrease. Building on their prior knowledge of integers, students will solve multi-step problems involving whole numbers, decimals, and fractions. They will also use variables to represent quantities in real-world and mathematical problems. Geometric formulas will be used to solve problems involving: perimeter, area, surface area, and volume. They will also draw, construct, and describe geometric shapes with given conditions. The concept of random sampling will be studied as students will compare two population sets and describe the differences between them.

Grade 7 **Pre-Algebra** **Full Year**

In seventh grade Pre-Algebra, students will focus on five main areas: The Number System, Ratios and Proportional Relationships, Expressions and Equations, Geometry, Statistics and Probability. We will extend the use of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of rational numbers to solve real-world and mathematical problems. In addition, students will identify and order irrational numbers. The concept of ratios and proportions will be used to solve various types of percent problems. Students will be asked to calculate discounts, interest, taxes, tips, and percent of increase and/ or decrease. Building on their prior knowledge of rational numbers, students will study one-variable equations and inequalities extensively, including equations with variables on both-sides, compound inequalities and absolute value. They will also use variables to represent quantities in real-world and mathematical problems. The study of figures will include circles, triangles, quadrilaterals, polygons, cubes and right prisms. Students will analyze two- and three-dimensional figures using area, volume and surface area. The concept of random sampling will be studied as students will compare two population sets and describe the differences between them.

Grade 8 **Introduction to Algebra I** **Full Year**

Introduction to Algebra is designed to give students a foundation for all future mathematics courses and provide basic skills and remediation on an individualized basis. The fundamentals of algebraic problem-solving are explained and there will be opportunities for students to explore: foundations of Algebra, solving equations, an introduction to functions, linear functions, and data analysis and probability. Throughout the course, the following Algebra I assessment anchors will be emphasized: Operations with Real Numbers & Expressions, Linear Equations, Functions, and Coordinate Geometry.

Grade 8 **Algebra I** **Full Year**

Algebra I will focus on algebraic concepts in great detail. Students will solve equations and inequalities; identify functions; write, solve and graph linear functions; write, solve and graph linear inequalities; apply several methods in solving systems of equations and systems of linear inequalities; apply rules of exponents to simplify algebraic expressions; write, simplify, multiply, divide, and factor polynomials; simplify radical expressions; and apply the Pythagorean Theorem and its Converse. Throughout all topics, real-world situations will be incorporated and students will apply several problem-solving techniques. This course has a demanding pace in order to be prepared for the Keystone Exam taken in the spring. It should only be taken if a student has a very strong understanding of the basics of Algebra concepts.

Grade 8 **Geometry** **Full Year**
This course offers a thorough introduction to the basic concepts of Euclidean Geometry and prepares students for the geometry portion of the SAT test. Students will apply the characteristics of angles as well as parallel and perpendicular lines. They will write algebraic and geometric proofs that focus on congruency and similarity. Students will explore the properties of polygons with the main emphasis on the different types of quadrilaterals. Students will find the surface area and volume of multiple three-dimensional shapes such as prisms, pyramids, cylinders, cones and spheres. Students will be introduced to properties of circles and to right triangle trigonometry. Students must have satisfactorily completed Algebra I to enroll in this course since much emphasis is placed on the application of algebra skills. Upon successful completion of this course, students would take either Algebra II or Differentiated Mathematics.

SCIENCE

Grade 6 **Physical Science** **Full Year**
Sixth grade students gain a background in physical science and chemistry. The students demonstrate and apply "The Scientific Method" while conducting and testing science experiments. The class completes science activities by using a "hands-on" approach to successfully develop laboratory skills based on chemistry and physical science principles. The students create, test, observe and analyze concepts in chemical and physical science. The metric system is used throughout sixth grade class work, lab procedures and experiments. Assessments are evaluated on group work, individual effort on tests, quizzes, laboratory experiments, projects and activities. The first half of the year is devoted to chemistry, and the students explore how matter interacts. The second half of the year (physical science), students investigate how matter reacts with each other. *A drug and alcohol unit, including the DARE (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education) program addresses peer pressure, support and prevention.

Grade 7 **Earth and Space Science** **Full Year**
New for the 2020-21 school year, students will now complete the Earth and Space Science course. This course provides students with a background in earth and space science. The major disciplines presented are Earth's chemistry, geology, weather and climate, and astronomy. This is an integrated, inquiry-based science course aligned to the PA standards for Science and Technology as well as the PA Common Core. The scientific method is infused throughout lab activities and investigations. A hands-on approach is utilized to successfully develop laboratory skills based on scientific concepts. The students use technology and various media resources to reinforce course content and stay abreast of current events. Assessment is based on group work and individual effort on tests, quizzes, laboratory investigations, homework and activities/projects.

Grade 8**Earth & Space Science****Full Year**

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**For the 2021-22 school year, students will take Life Science in 8th grade.*

SOCIAL STUDIES**Grade 6****Social Studies****Full Year**

Sixth grade students study the development of ancient civilizations from prehistory through the Middle Ages. Students focus on the following civilizations: Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Greece, Rome, and the European and Middle Ages. Students analyze these civilizations to determine their effects on the modern world. Students explore each civilization through the acronym, G.R.A.P.E.S., which stands for Geography, Religion, Achievements, Politics, Economy, and Social Structure. The Social Studies curriculum also now includes instruction from the Second Step Program. The prior 6th grade elective, Study Skills, has also been absorbed into the social studies curriculum. Assessments include tests, quizzes, written assignments, G.R.A.P.E.S., homework, and projects.

Grade 7**Social Studies****Full Year**

Seventh grade students make connections between the physical and culture world in social studies. The physical geography component answers two questions: what is geography, and why study it? The students analyze the earth's location, features and physical systems. The culture geography component examines government, economics, population, world land use, transportation, and communication. Students investigate the following regions of the world: North America, Africa, South America, Europe, and Asia. The course concludes with an introduction to 8th grade U.S. history, covering Native Americans through the French and Indian War. There is an emphasis on appropriate use and integration of technology to create student understanding. An added area of focus for the social studies curriculum is the interdisciplinary themes, which are usually social studies driven. The Social Studies curriculum also now includes instruction from the Second Step Program. Student assessment is based on writing assignments, tests, quizzes, projects, and homework.

Grade 8**Social Studies****Full Year**

Eighth grade students study the chronological history of Early America from the Road to the American Revolution to introducing the divisions that almost end the Union. Student studies may include the following periods of American History: the American Revolution, the Articles of Confederation, The U.S. Constitution, the New Republic, the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Eras, Western Expansion, Social Reform in America, Technology and American Ingenuity, and The Civil War. Students analyze these historical events to determine their effects on present-day America and identify the role of local events on American history. The Social Studies curriculum also now includes instruction from the Second Step Program. Assessments include tests, quizzes, written assignments, homework, and projects.

Architects: Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Gehry and Bjark Ingles. Students sketch the buildings of these Architects. Extensive use of clay is made to aid in learning how to “think” like an Architect. Students then learn the program Homestyler.com and design a house from the ground up.

Grade 8

Art

Twelve Weeks

Self-portraiture is the focus. Students study in detail the work and lives of Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol and Chuck Close. Students participate in a real studio atmosphere, learning how to use oil paint and clean brushes. Students then learn about the “Design process”, creating their own self portrait in oil paint. With any additional time, students access the great wealth of material available on the “Google Arts and Culture” website.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Grade 6

Computer Science 6

Six Weeks

In the sixth grade, we focus on the essentials of Document Design, basic presentation software and a comprehensive introduction to computer programming. The students learn the ins and outs of document and presentation design, with a strong concentration on the skill of programming. The following topics are covered in some detail:

- ❖ Intermediate to Advanced Word Processing (*Microsoft Word, Google Docs*)
- ❖ Desktop Publishing (*Microsoft Publisher, PowerPoint*)
- ❖ Creating video games using 3D world-based drag-and-drop code editor software(*Kodu Game Lab*)

Grade 7

Computer Science 7

Six Weeks

In the seventh grade, the students are encouraged to enhance the design skills they acquired in the sixth grade. The students will be learning intermediate to advanced spreadsheet applications along with a more comprehensive approach to drag and drop programming. Students will use Scratch to create animation and interactivity. Students will ultimately create an interactive game interface. The following topics are all covered in some detail:

- ❖ Intermediate Spreadsheet Applications (*Microsoft Excel is used to teach Mathematical Formulas & Functions, Cell Formatting, Charting*)
- ❖ Programming basics using drag and drop code editors (*Scratch*)

**Grade 8
Weeks**

Computer Science 8

Twelve

In the eighth grade, students have chosen to take computers as one of their 12-week electives. Students begin by revisiting programming software from 6th and 7th grade, creating and calling variables for more complex game design. Students will also spend time in a 3-Dimensional space designing worlds to animate and interact with. The class concludes with a very comprehensive text-based approach to programming where students are introduced to the computer programming language of Python. The following topics are covered in some detail:

- ❖ Programming and Game Design (*Kodu Game Lab, Scratch*)
- ❖ 3-D World Design, Animation and Interactivity (*Alice3*)
- ❖ Text-Based Computer Programming (*intro to Python using codehs.com*)

Grade 6, 7**General Music****Full Year 1 days per**

General Music offers a unique opportunity for students to perform on both guitar and piano. Through performance students learn about note-reading, melody, harmony, texture, rhythm, and form. Students should expect to be assessed by classroom performance, self-evaluation, and playing tests.

Grade 6, 7, 8**Orchestra****Full Year 3 days per week**

With Orchestral instruments as our vehicle, our goal in Orchestra is to offer meaningful musical experiences that will foster sequential technical musical development, enhance musical awareness, deepen musical understanding and expression as well as offer exposure to an array of musical cultures, styles and difficulty levels.

Orchestra is a year-long course that is a continuation of study across grades 6, 7 and 8. Students apply their skills in a full group setting. The orchestra will be scheduled to perform two concerts during the school year. These performances are required. Orchestra is a yearlong commitment and students are required to complete the year.

Grade 8**Guitar****Twelve weeks-5 days/week**

This class is designed for the beginner guitarist. The students will be exposed to multiple styles of music on the guitar. Students will learn proper guitar technique while mastering the basic guitar concepts of open chords, moveable chords, music notation and tablature. Students should expect to be assessed by classroom performance, self-evaluation, and playing tests, as well as a culminating performance. The goal of the class is for all participants to be equipped with the basic guitar technique in order to continue with future self-study.

Grade 8**Keyboarding****Twelve weeks-5 days/week**

Beginning Piano & Keyboard is designed for students with limited or no piano playing experience who are interested in learning basic performance skills on the piano and electronic keyboard. The class will focus on teaching students to read standard notation. Additional skills will include, but not be limited to, playing scales, transposition, and basic composition skills. Students should expect to be assessed by classroom performance, self-evaluation, and playing tests, as well as a culminating performance.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH**Grade 6-7-8
week****Physical Education and Health****1= 2 days per**

Middle school students apply their emerging mature developmental patterns in the areas of fitness, team and individual sports, dance/aerobics, and low organizational games, to encourage lifetime involvement. Students have option of participating in intramural games, gaining insight into fair play, good sportsmanship, and the experience of competitive play. Students will also gain knowledge related to human health including: good nutrition, disease prevention, and function and structures of the body.

VIDEO PRODUCTION LAB AND TECHNOLOGY

Grade 6

Video Production Lab

Six Weeks

This course will introduce every 6th grade students to the production cycle of pre and post production. The students will learn audio techniques to add to video and create a rich production quality. Students will learn the difference between A roll and B roll. The students will infuse the audio and filming techniques into a news story for project based assignments.

The following skills and content will be emphasized:

- Using story boarding
- Mastering audio production
- Experimenting with camera angles
- Writing scripts
- Editing Wimple Video

Grade 7

Video Production Lab

Six Weeks

This course will extend use of every 7th grade student of the production cycle of pre and post production with a focus on editing. The students will use the techniques taught in the 6th grade video production class to expand in editing and creating polished products. The students will have two video projects to complete in this course. The students will use video editing software to add sound, transitions, titles, and cut video from their A roll and B roll. The students will complete one of the projects for class use and the other product will be published on the morning announcements.

The following skills and content will be emphasized:

- Editing and Post Production
- Using iMovie and Garage Band
- Compiling scenes
- Adding music and editing sound
- Adding special effects and credits
- Developing live productions

Grade 8

Video Production Lab

Twelve Weeks

This course will have the students be in charge of the live production of the morning announcements. The students will create content for the daily announcements and PHTV News. The students will learn each aspect of the live production from audio board, set editing, title bars, scrolling contents, lighting, camera techniques and more. The students will rotate jobs for the 12 weeks to create a weekly piece of content. As they are designing, filming, and editing the content they will learn the studio from head to toe. This project based class will give students the opportunity to gain skills in writing, public speaking, technology, filming, artistic creativity, and telling a story to their peers and to the community.

The following skills and content will be emphasized:

- Producing live news feeds
- Controlling audio board functions
- Using set designs
- Learning the Tricaster software
- Developing titles during live broadcast with Live Text software
- Creating news segments and commercials for PHMS events

- **Learning Support**-Services provided to students who have an identified need in understanding or in using language (spoken or written), reading, writing or mathematics. Accommodations and modifications may be provided to the general curriculum or through more intensive interventions may be necessary to meet the needs of individual students.
- **Life Skills Support**- Life Skills Support is designed to provide a continuum of services for students with intellectual disabilities and students whose social/behavioral skills are significantly delayed. These students require instruction in daily living skills in addition to receiving instruction in ELA, Mathematics, Science and Writing utilizing the Alternate Eligible Content that is aligned to the PA Core Standards. A primary goal of the Life Skills Support program is to grow a student’s social/emotional development, communication, functional and vocational skills and provide Community Based Instruction (CBI) in order to increase the level of independent functioning.
- **Speech and Language Support**-Services are provided to students who demonstrate a need in the areas of articulation, language, auditory processing and fluency. The service is provided through various models including, push-in, pull-out individual and small group.
- **Vision Support**-Students with a visual impairment, including blindness are provided with appropriate services and supports to enable them to access and fully participate in the curriculum.

Middle Level Life Skills Support

The Life Skills Support program is designed to provide a continuum of services for students with intellectual disabilities and students whose social/behavioral skills are significantly delayed. These students require instruction in daily living skills in addition to receiving instruction in ELA, Mathematics, Science and Writing utilizing the Alternate Eligible Content that is aligned to the PA Core Standards. A primary goal of the Life Skills Support program is to grow a student’s social/emotional development, communication, functional and vocational skills and provide Community Based Instruction (CBI) in order to increase the level of independent functioning. Students will continue to work on the acquisition of new academic skills and focus on the following five domains of daily living skills:

- Personal Maintenance-personal hygiene and grooming
- Social/Behavioral Skills-understanding emotions, social interaction and responsible behavior
- Recreation & Leisure-exploring interests, hobbies, physical fitness, participation in sports/clubs
- Functional academics-skill development in Math, English-language Arts, Science & Writing
- Pre-vocational skills-career exploration, work behaviors/skills, interests and work expectations

The sequences of skills are developed and practiced across settings and are based on the individual needs of each student.

Gifted Support

The Gifted Support Program is designed to enrich and accelerate the basic curriculum with appropriate teaching strategies. The gifted support program emphasizes development of skills needed in leadership, communication, independence, appreciation, logic and creativity. To achieve these goals, the program provides lessons, activities and on-going education emphasizing various level skills, higher level thinking, problem-solving, oral and written communication and independent research.

High level thinking involves the use of base knowledge and understanding to engage the learner in evaluation, synthesis and analysis of a variety of topics. Problem-solving skills are those involved in the utilization of both convergent and divergent thinking patterns and teaching students to employ critical thinking skills in the solution of problems in the past, present and future. Communication skills include listening, reading, written expression and oral presentation which are all a vital part of the process. The final area, independent research skills, enables students to become life-long learners and to keep pace with the changing knowledge required in a

technologically innovative society. Students seek knowledge for themselves and discover, as well as use, methods in conveying the information to others.

Screening For Special Programs

A Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), which includes teachers, diagnosticians, administrators, and parents, completes a written educational report. The report includes:

- The student's educational, social, and physical history
- Educational needs and strengths
- Information from classroom observations
- Interpretation of assessment results
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Signatures of team members and any dissenting opinions

An Individualized Educational Program (IEP) is developed and implemented after completion of the (Evaluation Report) ER. Parents are invited to be a part of the planning team. Parents receive a written notice prior to the evaluation. The notice states:

- the basis upon which the referral was made
- the right to see all of the student's records
- the right to meet with a member of the evaluation team
- the procedures and test to be used and approximate timeline
- the right to object to the evaluation