INTRODUCTION

Middle School is a time of tremendous growth and change for young people. At Villa, during this critical time, we strike the balance between challenge and support in order to find the most optimal point of learning for our students. From becoming writers and historians, to exploring their interests in the arts, to learning in dynamic classes both in and outside our historic building, to becoming involved in our myriad of extracurricular opportunities, students develop the skills they will need and continue their journey in becoming the people, citizens and leaders that we all need.

At Villa, students employ our 21st Century Skills of critical thinking, creativity, caring, choice and collaboration so that they are well practiced and prepared for the opportunities and challenges that await them in high school and beyond.

HUMANITIES: ENGLISH & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Middle School Language Arts/English Program focuses on skilled and proficient communication, both written and oral. Language skills are integrated into all areas of the middle school curriculum including mathematics and science; however middle school humanities classes are specifically dedicated to promoting excellent overall communication skills.

Middle School Social Studies, Humanities, provides a well-rounded approach to understanding our culture and how it interplays with others in a global society. Civics, culture, geography, and history provide the content for the Social Studies program.

The program is integrated with other areas of the curriculum – Language Arts, Literature, and Religion – offering rich, broad, and deep opportunities for students to engage in holistic learning experiences. Students are invited and expected to employ their full array of research, technology, critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills with social studies projects.
SIXTH GRADE HUMANITIES

Social Studies provides an exciting introduction to elements of ancient cultures and the history of the world. The year begins with an overview and review of world geography terms and skills. We map the Middle East to bridge the present day countries and events to the history of the land. Our studies of the Old Testament in religion class are aligned with these same peoples and time periods. We study Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome and connect these cultures to each other and to our own. Historical eras of focus are the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Age of Revolutions. Discovering Our Past, A History of the World is the key textual and online resource for the class. Students also demonstrate knowledge of historical eras, making connections to our world today through project based learning activities.

Villa Academy embraces The Six Traits Plus One model of writing that focuses on six traits of writing competency: 1) Organization and Ideas 2) Content 3) Voice 4) Word Choice 5) Sentence Fluency 6) Conventions, and the Skill of Presentation. A process approach to written work is used, providing students with steps to take them through pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing stages to a final writing sample. Using novels as well as the Prentice Hall Literature Anthology and Writing & Grammar series as a foundation, students enjoy ample opportunities to write for different purposes in a variety of styles: descriptive, expository, narrative, persuasive, comparative and cause/effect. Writing mechanics, grammar and vocabulary building are emphasized throughout the writing process.

Through the use of the literature anthology and selected novels, the English program promotes the development of critical reading and analytical skills. The program affords the students a rich and varied offering of literature including classic and contemporary titles. Opportunities are provided for reflection and discussion of the aesthetics and meaning of literature relative to individual and universal themes. Students develop vocabulary, learn about different cultures and literary genres, and examine interesting and complex issues and challenges embedded in literature.

Sixth grade students develop strong oral presentation skills as a component of being an effective communicator. In all classes, the students enjoy opportunities to discuss, describe, and present as individual speakers or in small groups. Through speeches, oral readings and class discussions, students gain real world skills in public speaking. Students also integrate technology as a support for presentations; knowing how to use multimedia effectively is a focus of sixth grade.
SEVENTH GRADE HUMANITIES

Seventh Grade Humanities is taught as an interdisciplinary study of literature, writing, and world geography. Specific components of Seventh Grade Humanities include World Fair, Current Events, Literature, Creative Writing, and communication skills for the 21st Century.

World Fair

Seventh graders engage in student-based, active learning in World Geography by designing their own courses of study and demonstrations of learning for each of the five continent-based units. Students begin the year by reviewing the Five Themes of Geography as the framework geographers use to investigate new places. Then, within each unit, students learn, and then refine, the individual steps of the research process centered around a current or historical conflict set in that continent. This research process includes writing research questions, note-taking, evaluating sources and determining bias, organizing and outlining research, drafting and revising a formal essay, and accurately citing sources.

Student choices have ranged from ethnic conflicts, comparative religions, food insecurity, endangered species and deforestation, to ancient cultures, colonialism, and modern labor issues. Discrete writing lessons are taught to individual students through both formal and unstructured conferences with teachers as well as file-sharing on Google Drive. The year-long study of geography culminates in the “Villa Academy World Fair,” during which each student’s five projects are displayed for the entire school community.

Current Events

As a parallel investigation of global conflict in the World Fair, seventh graders also investigate current global conflicts. This unit of study asks students to identify issues from a collection of Pulitzer-Prize recognized journalism focused on current global conflict, and to summarize the current and historical status of the issue. They then apply their understanding of the Five Themes of Geography to the unit so as to understand more fully the context of the issue. Finally, seventh graders use mapping skills to visually map the story of the conflict through relevant geographic and cultural landmarks, government and political centers, population zones, and trade routes for the exchange of goods and ideas. Each student formally presents one of these current events to the class to reinforce effective presentation and public speaking skills.

Literature

Seventh Grade students read novels that support global learning and investigate the author’s craft, while exploring global conflict. Each unit of global study is complemented by a selection of literature set in or written by an author from the focused continent. Throughout the year, some literature offerings are read as a whole class, while other units are comprised of literature circle groups of students reading a common text. During literature circle units, independent choice is also an available option for students.

Within literature circles students investigate and experience a variety of writing styles, learn how authors incorporate realistic and fact-based research into fictional stories, and discuss different elements of the author’s craft. These elements include authentic
dialogue, plot structure, effective use of language, characterization, and setting as a means of teaching about history and culture. This holistic study of the author’s craft provides a firm foundation for their own narrative writing.

Creative Writing
Because of the intentional instruction of writing for information in the World Fair process, Creative Writing has become a central theme of Seventh Grade English. Throughout the year students analyze the author’s craft in various novels and short stories, and then, through writing practice, work to find their own voice as an author. Investigation of the author’s craft includes characterization, setting, theme, figurative language, dialogue, and plot structure. Each month, students engage in a variety of discrete lessons to refine their own writing focused on one of these specific elements of literature. Understanding and application of the elements is assessed throughout the year with more substantial writing assignments. Students implement these skills as they complete the culminating task of Seventh Grade Humanities: a fusion of research and creative writing in a realistic fiction novella based on one of the conflicts of study in a World Fair project.

EIGHTH GRADE HUMANITIES
Eighth Grade Humanities is a more conventional model of English and History. While components of each are complementary and integrated, the pedagogical approach is traditional. In this way, students learn to be confident writers and enthusiastic historians while preparing for the rigor of a demanding high school program.

Culminating Project
The Culminating Project at Villa is a collaborative project that investigates a single theme through the lens of the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Social Studies, and individualized, directed scientific connections in Science. The SDGs build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to eradicate poverty, injustice, and create a better world for future generations. The eighth grade English curriculum focuses on writing for a variety of purposes (aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the NCSS C3 Standards, and with strict adherence to MLA formatting and publishing guidelines) all surrounding various aspects of the students’ chosen Culminating Project Theme. The research process and writing skills are directed, but there is flexibility in content within the scope of the chosen theme. Written assessments include a combination of expository essays, compare/contrast essays, nonfiction literature analyses, annotated bibliographies, spoken poetry, and persuasive formal letters.

Literature
Literature selections for Eighth Grade center around themes of social justice issues, as the books offered provide a window into another person’s world, rather than a mirror of our own experience. This complements the theme of Leadership throughout Eighth Grade by encouraging students to find common ground with, and develop empathy and compassion for others.

Some of the literature selections are offered as whole-class readings, while some are comprised of literature circles surrounding a common small-group text, and others are offered as independent reading.
Selections include 20th Century classics, poetry, nonfiction texts, and contemporary novels. The discussions and assignments within literature units are built upon the works of Brene Brown and Rosetta Lee, through which students learn to be empathetic citizens with compassionate hearts and confident minds.

**U.S. History**

Eighth grade Social Studies provides a well-rounded approach to understanding American history, government structure, and culture. U.S. History content serves as the vehicle for continued development of critical skills, including risk-taking, public speaking, reading complex texts, researching, summarizing, writing, and problem solving. Students investigate a variety of sources, including textbooks, maps, photographs, political cartoons, journals, films, and newspapers.

**Mock Trial**

One major component of Eighth grade United States History is Mock Trial. To apply the study of the United States Constitution in a real-world context, students engage in a mini-trial, during which they learn essential skills and information to successfully participate in due process from investigation to trial. This includes collaboration with community resources, as they learn from legal experts how to conduct legal examinations, criminal investigation and forensics from the Seattle Police Department, and conducting forensic investigations of trial evidence in Science class.

After studying Westward Expansion, students charge President Andrew Jackson with Crimes Against Humanity for his role in the Cherokee Removal Act and the Trail of Tears. Each class section works together to prosecute or defend President Jackson, building their cases from a collection of primary source materials including speeches, letters, art, Congressional acts, military orders, and narratives.

Eighth graders think critically as they analyze both sides of the issue, write witness testimony, and develop complex legal strategies. They then enact the trial as prosecutors, defenders, and witnesses in front of a federal judge and volunteer jury at the Federal Courthouse in downtown Seattle. The amount of work that goes into this process, without the foresight of a known outcome, is what makes this such a rich and authentic learning experience.

**Communication Skills**

In both Seventh and Eighth Grade Humanities, writing instruction is individualized according to students’ strengths, weaknesses, and topic focuses through teacher/student conferences. More general building blocks are provided through Word Voyage (an online vocabulary-building program), discrete grammar instruction, and directed tasks aimed at refining sentence, paragraph, and essay structure.
MATHEMATICS

The Middle School mathematics program is designed to provide students with accelerated course offerings in preparation for advanced and Honors classes at the high school level. The courses are developed around the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and a variety of resources are used to aid students in developing mastery of the subject matter.

Students are instructionally grouped according to multiple and varied data sources including teacher recommendations, an end of the year assessment, and the mathematics background and comfort/confidence level of each student. The design of the schedule, as well as the collaboration of the math teaching team allow for grade level projects with students between and among math groups. This permits a highly responsive approach to meeting student needs.

Algebra provides the building blocks for all further math courses, as well as many every-day applications and ideas. A strong foundation in Algebra is fundamental for success in further math (and science) courses.

PRE-ALGEBRA A & B: 6TH & 7TH GRADE

In Pre-Algebra A & B, students review and solidify fundamental concepts learned previously as well as learn introductory algebra concepts in preparation for future courses. Students work towards mastery of 6th grade mathematics standards and are introduced to many 7th grade mathematics standards. We emphasize problem solving, examining different methods for solving, and explaining your process. Students learn through direct instruction, explorations, use of manipulatives, and various other activities. They practice organizing their learning of new concepts through guided note taking.

ALGEBRA 7A: 7TH GRADE

Designed to allow students to start Algebra in seventh grade, Algebra 7A covers the first half Algebra I over the whole year. The student progresses through the curriculum at a pace that allows them to gain a higher level of understanding. The course also gives students the skills needed to use Algebra to solve real world type problems.

ALGEBRA 7AB & ALGEBRA 8AB: 7TH & 8TH GRADE

In Algebra 7AB or 8AB, students learn the basic content and skills of traditional Algebra. Students apply their previous knowledge to learn new, more abstract ideas and concepts. They learn how to think in mathematical ways to help solve more complex problems in different areas of application. They have opportunities to work individually and in collaborative groups to solve problems encountered in business and science. They translate word problems into different forms of algebraic expressions. Students also practice how to take notes so that they can use the information to help them solve problems and justify the steps in their solutions to a problem.
ALGEBRA 8B: 8TH GRADE
Designed for students starting Algebra in eighth grade, Algebra 8B finishes the second half of the Algebra 7A course started in seventh grade. The student progresses through the curriculum at a pace that allows them gain a higher level of understanding and the skills needed to use Algebra to solve real world type problems.

GEOMETRY: 8TH GRADE
Geometry develops a formal approach to algebraic reasoning. Students work with the Properties of Algebra to see how they form the logical approach to solving problems and then learn concepts of Geometry. Students use definitions, postulates, and theorems to support their solutions. They also learn how to write geometric proofs using a variety of methods.

SCIENCE
Middle School Science is hands-on and inquiry-based, seeking to animate the intellectual curiosity of students about their world and the magic of science. Key science concepts are the vehicles for students to develop inquiry skills – ask, research, and answer their own questions. Opportunities abound for students to observe, question, infer, predict, collect data, communicate, and collaborate about science; thus the scientific process runs continuously throughout Middle School Science.

Middle School Science projects are active hubs of hands-on investigations. Common activities include creating models, conducting demonstrations, researching, discussing, and establishing or continuing projects that lead to lasting positive changes for the Villa community.

There are opportunities to use the 31-acre Villa campus and its natural features as an outdoor classroom. Additionally, the students travel to The Museum of Flight to participate in the Space Shuttle Simulation, to the North Cascades Institute to conduct a Carnivore Field Research study, and to Eastern Washington to study the geologic features of Washington State.

SIXTH GRADE SCIENCE
Metric System, Human Body, Motion and Forces, Light and Sound, Environmental Science
- An introduction to the metric system
- The systems of the human body – how they work and how to keep them healthy
- The movement and interactions of matter (examining motion, forces, and waves)
- A hands-on environmental field science project
SEVENTH GRADE SCIENCE
Geology, Landforms, Atmosphere and Weather, Astronomy, Environmental Science

- The major types of rocks and minerals – how they are formed via the rock cycle
- Constructive and destructive forces of planet Earth, including the forces that created the landforms of the Pacific Northwest
- Layers of atmosphere, and major types of weather and their causes
- The major components of our solar system – observing the vast distances of space and creating a model of our solar system
- An environmental science project with field and research components

EIGHTH GRADE SCIENCE
Biology - Ecology, Characteristics of Life, Cell Theory, Structure and Function, Genetics, Evolution, Classification-Taxonomy

- The eleven characteristics of life distinguishing between things that are living, formerly living and non-living
- A hands-on introduction to ecological concepts
- The process of examining cells and tissues under the microscope and creating 3 dimensional models of a cell
- An introduction to genetics
- The importance of understanding natural selection and adaptations
- The levels of classification and developing a classification key
- An interdisciplinary culminating research project regarding environmental science, social justice, and spiritual connection
WORLD LANGUAGES

The Middle School World Language program offers students either French or Spanish as their language of choice during their three years in the program. During middle school, the students will complete the equivalent of the first year of high school French or Spanish.

The Middle School World Language program is communication based and designed to build proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. An important component of the program is also to introduce students to the culture, history, geography, and customs of French and Spanish-speaking countries. Following the National Foreign Language Standards, the program promotes the natural approach where students learn French and Spanish in thematic contexts while doing meaningful related activities.

VISUAL ARTS AND MUSIC

A hallmark of Villa Academy’s mission to educate to fullness of person is a rich program in visual arts and music. We seek to develop within each student a unique capacity to create, perform, and respond to the world through various art forms based on knowledge and skills that have been nurtured through our academic and student life programs. The arts provide a powerful means to foster a joy of learning. Middle school students spend one semester each year in Visual Arts Class and one semester in Music Class.

VISUAL ARTS

In the visual arts program, art history and a study of aesthetics and critique is continued from their lower school studies. Students work with a variety of art mediums and techniques as well. mediums include painting, drawing, printmaking, and ceramics.

Opportunities for integrated projects between and among various curricular areas provide the students with relevant experiences encompassing a variety of media. Performance-based assessment is ample through finished art pieces and in-class performance pieces that showcase the efforts and accomplishments of our students.

MUSIC

In the music program, students continue their lower school study of music with more sophisticated instrumental and vocal techniques. Using the child-centered Orff Approach, students learn by doing. In the 6th grade, the curriculum is percussion and singing based, as students explore the folk music of world cultures. In the 7th and 8th grades, the curriculum is technology-based, as students explore music through composition. Outside of class time, students also have the opportunity to participate in co-curricular activities such as band, jazz band, Villa Violins, Liturgical choir, drama, and private lessons.
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Villa Academy’s Physical Education program is tailored for the developmental levels of the 11-14 year old learner. The scope and sequence of the program is based on the National Standards for Physical Education. The curriculum includes a balance of skills and concepts in the areas of games, team sports, and fitness activities. Fitness is emphasized as a necessary element of healthy living. Through active participation and a variety of activities, the goal of the program is to promote fitness and fun. The Middle School curriculum is designed with high expectations for the young adolescent’s psychomotor, cognitive, and affective learning.

Several examples of the type and variety of activities students actively engage in include Frisbee games, yoga, volleyball, soccer, basketball, floor hockey, softball, and rope jumping. Villa’s gym boasts a climbing wall that affords the students opportunity to develop balance, strength and body control. Sportsmanship, self-improvement, individual growth, and teamwork are emphasized. The campus, soccer field, and climbing wall provide alternative locations to the students for their physical education classes.

LIBRARY

Middle School students visit the library every two weeks. The goal of the library program is to develop students who value learning and can apply the skills, strategies and processes to be independent users of information.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a tool to enhance the learning process and is integrated into every content area of the Middle School program. The objectives of the Technology program encompass knowing the characteristics and use of computer hardware, operating systems, and software programs; understanding the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual; and understanding the relevant use of technology in a learning environment.

Middle School students participate in a personal Laptop Program designed to provide each student with his or her own “toolkit” for learning in all classes. The Laptop program promotes individual initiative and creativity while providing for an interactive learning environment that draws upon a student’s skills and knowledge. Students use application software (word processing, presentation, and spreadsheet) and web-based resources. Laptop orders are coordinated by the school and can be serviced through Villa’s Technology Department.
ADVISORY PROGRAM
Villa Academy’s Middle School Advisory program supports our whole child development of compassionate hearts and confident minds through intentional time dedicated to developing connections within a small supportive group of same-sex peers and a trusting relationship with a caring adult advocate.

ADVOCACY & ACADEMIC GROWTH
Advisory provides an adult advocate for every student. Advisors nurture academic life, oversee school logistics, and coordinate communication between school and home.

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL GROWTH
Advisory activities help develop self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making skills within a safe environment where students can take healthy risks and grow.

COMMUNITY BUILDING & INVIGORATION
Advisory provides opportunities for inclusive social interaction that promotes our school climate of respect, integrity and compassion in a structure that allows for connection, creativity and fun.

GRADE LEVEL THEMES
• Sixth grade: Independence
• Seventh grade: Community
• Eighth grade: Leadership

ORGANIZATION AND STUDY SKILLS
Villa’s Organization and Study Skills Curriculum is designed to assist our students in the development of the time, material, and space management skills that facilitate successful learning.

Middle School students participate in a variety of assessments and learning activities that help them identify their individual learning styles and preferences. They are then supported as they translate this self-knowledge into appropriate study strategies and habits. The Organization and Study Skills Curriculum acknowledges what is unique about individual learners and enhances each student’s academic voyage.
RELIGION

The Middle School religion program promotes a personal and active faith in God. We encourage students to develop their ability to reflect on their relationship with self, God, and others. The sanctity and respect of self, based on a student’s appreciation of his or her gifts and talents and relationship with family and God, are fundamental to all relationships.

Students learn about the relationship with God and others through the Catholic tradition and Cabrinian spirituality. Personal and communal prayer, liturgical celebrations, retreats, and community service activities provide opportunities for the students to act upon their faith. In addition to class and school wide service opportunities, middle schoolers work nine hours of community service each trimester.

SIXTH GRADE RELIGION

Community and Old Testament
The focus of the sixth grade religion program is a study of the Old Testament and its biblical characters. Students familiarize themselves with the people of salvation history and the role each character played. Readings, activities, reflections, and discussions challenge students to make connections to their own life experiences and support their personal spiritual journeys.

As part of the Villa community service expectation, sixth grade students partner with Westside Baby, a social service agency in West King County that supports families in need. Each month, one advisory group spends one and a half hours sorting and organizing supplies.

SEVENTH GRADE RELIGION

Community and New Testament
The seventh grade program primarily focuses on the New Testament and the life of Jesus Christ. To live as Jesus did as portrayed in New Testament. Scripture themes of community, love, hope, justice, courage, reconciliation, and stewardship forms a basis for class discussion and activities. Community service provides opportunities for putting New Testament Gospel values into action.

EIGHTH GRADE RELIGION

Service, Ethics, World Religions, and Being Members of the Church
The eighth grade Religion program focuses on living our Catholic faith and being members of the larger community. Themes of service, ethics, personal spirituality, and world religions are central to the Religion program.

Personal ethics is a topic that comes at an important time in the lives of young adolescents. Each student is developing personal beliefs and values that will guide his or her future attitudes, thinking, and behaviors. Literature is a vehicle for illustrating the importance of ethical behavior. Responsible choices, values, and Catholic Social Teaching are discussion topics that animate this unit of study.