

# Upper School Curriculum

A broad based middle school program emphasizes arts and academics equally, offering English, foreign languages, history, math, and science, and fine arts including art, drama, chorus, and band. We offer English as a second language and we encourage the use of technology across the curriculum.

## **English**

*Grade 6* Meeting seven periods each week, this course teaches students to appreciate literature, to think critically, and to write effectively. It works on improving vocabulary, spelling, grammar, paragraph writing, and organization skills. Study skills and organizational strategies are covered in a variety of ways throughout the year.

*Grade 7* Students read various genres to cultivate the ability to recognize and to emulate good writing. Utilizing the writing process, they write frequently and continue to develop the mechanical skills and vocabulary to support self-expression. Using early America as a foundation, the course parallels our study of American history.

*Grade 8* The course content further explores the connection of American literature and history in various genres. Students work on the organization of the expository essay and continue writing fiction, poetry, and personal narratives. Vocabulary and grammar study continue as well.

*Grade 9* Students read a variety of literary genres to become familiar with the roots of Western and non-Western cultures. Frequent writing assignments emphasize the establishment of voice and the ways of achieving cohesive and precise prose. Grammar study becomes more sophisticated, and individualized vocabulary study continues.

## **English as a Second Language (ESL)**

The Bement School provides a safe and challenging academic and boarding environment for international students. Students gain confidence in their ability to communicate and to interact in English while learning about American culture. The ESL course of study offers different options for students, depending upon their English language ability. Most ESL students participate

in regular math, science, and history classes. However, some have special courses which have been modified to meet their language needs. Tutorial assistance is offered to assure that students experience success in their academic classes. Bement's small and intensive ESL classes allow students the opportunity to improve their language skills rapidly. The ESL curriculum emphasizes the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The subject matter in ESL classes often parallels the curriculum found in the regular classroom, but from a second-language perspective. Our goal is to help international students acquire the language competence necessary to be academically successful in an English-speaking program.

### **Fine Arts**

*Visual Arts* The visual arts course fosters self-expression, creativity, and experimentation in an open-studio atmosphere where students explore traditional and experimental media and techniques. Sixth graders learn about color theory and perspective by drawing still lifes and portraits. Seventh graders continue studying these elemental skills along with the principles of design. Individuals explore a variety of media through both two and three-dimensional projects. Eighth graders intensify their study of the techniques of painting, drawing, and collage. Sculpture and book design are added in grade nine. Art history is incorporated into the curriculum. Finished works are exhibited both on and off campus.

*Drama* Sixth graders progress from experimenting with non-verbal improvisation to participating in short, informal plays. Seventh and eighth graders elect either a formal production class or a non-performance drama class. Ninth graders perform in the annual spring musical. The drama program promotes self-confidence, creativity, self-discipline, and the ability to work cooperatively with others.

*Concert Choir* This progressive choral music program helps students develop their performance skills. They are coached in intonation, breathing and posture, harmony, and performance. Students in grades seven through nine may elect either concert choir, band, or both.

*Band* This progressive instrumental band program develops each student's musicianship and skill. Through the study of a specific band instrument (flute, clarinet,

alto sax, tenor sax, trumpet, trombone, and baritone horn) students learn both melodic notation and rhythmic notation. Students in grades seven through nine may elect either band, concert choir, or both.

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### **Foreign Language**

*Grade 6* This Latin course introduces students to formal foreign language study. It prepares them for studying other Romance languages, and it helps them understand the roots of many English words. At the end of grade 6, students choose to study French, Spanish, or Latin.

*French, Grades 7–9* Students work on developing four skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The French texts emphasize communication and a broad range of activities: realistic situations, role-playing, and group and paired exercises. Texts contain a wealth of cultural information, giving students a look at the similarities and differences of the French-speaking world. Frequent use of video and audio cassettes stimulates discussion and challenges listening skills. Students may participate in a cultural exchange program with a French middle school.

*Latin, Grades 7–9* This course stresses fundamental vocabulary and grammar. It encourages students to learn the structure and patterns of Latin rather than simply to memorize forms. Selections for translation include myths, stories, and history. The course presents extensive information on Roman life and culture and Roman contributions to Western society.

*Spanish, Grades 7–9* The Spanish course emphasizes the ability to communicate ideas by speaking and writing. Students use textbooks and tapes rich in thematic vocabulary and sequential grammar lessons. Reports, games, and skits help to fine-tune verbal skills and to instill confidence. Videos, short stories, and magazines highlight Hispanic life and culture.

### **History**

*Grade 6* Sixth graders study geography for three trimesters. The year begins by reviewing the physical features of continents and bodies of water. Students then explore the geography and cultures of the United States, Europe, and Asia.

*Grade 7* This course covers the first half of a two-year

American history study. Beginning with the Age of Exploration and the Colonial Period, it emphasizes the American Revolution. The year concludes with the Mexican War. Historical fiction is used to enhance the curriculum.

*Grade 8* Eighth graders continue the American history course started in grade 7. Beginning with the Civil War period, the course advances chronologically through the 19th century to the present, investigating the social, economic, and military characteristics of each period. Historical fiction is used to enhance the curriculum.

*Grade 9* Ninth graders study the ancient civilizations of the Middle East, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. By examining important individuals from these civilizations and their roles in history, students learn about the cultural and social aspects of each society.

## **Mathematics**

*Mathematics I, Grade 6* Mathematics I emphasizes conceptual understanding and computational competency with whole numbers, common fractions, and decimal fractions. Students utilize various problemsolving techniques, and games stimulate competency and confidence.

*Mathematics II, Grade 6 or 7* Mathematics II covers computation of whole numbers, fractions and decimals, estimation, ratio, proportion, percent, number theory, probability, and statistics. Students examine a small number of topics in depth.

*Pre-algebra, Grades 7 or 8* Pre-algebra quickly reviews many topics of arithmetic: computation and problemsolving with fractions and decimals, estimation, ratios and proportions, percent, number theory, and the metric system. It introduces and works intensively on operations with signed numbers, solving equations, problem-solving with equations, properties of intersecting and parallel lines, properties of polygons and circles, volume and surface area of geometric solids, the Pythagorean theorem, and trigonometry.

*Algebra, Grades 8 or 9* This rigorous first-year algebra course covers simple, complex, and simultaneous linear equations and inequalities; operations of polynomials; factoring; functions; graphing variation; rational and irrational numbers; and quadratic functions. Throughout the year students practice a wide variety

of word problems.

*Geometry, Grade 9* Geometry instruction introduces and develops deductive reasoning. Working individually and in small cooperative groups, students learn traditional content areas: proofs, area and volume, triangles, circles, congruency and similarity, and coordinate geometry. Practice and review through Geometer Sketchpad is utilized. Problem-solving maintains and strengthens algebraic skills.

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Science

*Grade 6* Students explore life science, especially animal biology, through texts, lectures, lab experiences, and enrichment activities. The scientific method, an integral part of this introductory course, incorporates the metric system, identification of variables, and proper lab procedure.

*Grade 7* Students study earth science, specifically utilizing the environment and Connecticut and Deerfield River valley to teach orienteering, erosion, weathering, and geology. Meteorology and topography are also studied. Their study culminates in an understanding of weather patterns and geological systems affecting the New England region.

*Grade 8* Students study basic chemistry and physics to gain competence and confidence with lab skills and procedures. Chemistry covers the periodic table, chemical reactions, and balancing of chemical equations. Physics focuses on the general properties of matter from laws of motion to forces and energy.

*Grade 9* At a more advanced level, ninth graders study biological concepts and their relation to human beings. They examine cell structure and function, molecular genetics, evolution, and archaeology. The genetic analysis of an Old Deerfield dairy herd, part of a long-term study of heredity, highlights the program. A full-scale, archaeological excavation and animal dissection complete the year.

### **Computers**

Two computer labs in the Clagett McLennan Library allow students to conduct research, develop ideas, generate graphs, and write reports. Each classroom is equipped with a state-of-the-art PC with a 21" monitor and a high-speed Internet connection.

**Adjunct Curriculum**

All students in the Upper School participate in a community service program. Grades 7 through 9 leave campus to work with residents at local nursing home facilities.

Students in grade 6 participate in varied oncampus service projects.

Additionally, students in grades 6 through 9 take part in a “Wellness Program” which covers many topics including health, nutrition, human sexuality, and substance abuse.