

Grade 8 Curriculum Summary

(The text that follows is adapted from the websites of member schools of the Alliance for Public Waldorf education and the san Francisco Waldorf School.)

Like Janus, the Roman god of doorways, the eighth grader is looking in two directions simultaneously. On the one hand, the eighth grade is the culmination of the student's experience. It is a time of reflection, of summing up, and all the bittersweet feelings associated with an ending. At the same time, the eighth grader's gaze is turned towards the future and a new beginning. He or she fears, yet yearns for, the immense changes anticipated there. The eighth grade curriculum must address both of these impulses. The focus of the former is concentrated in the daily practice classes, where review and consolidation of practical skills and capacities are emphasized. In addition, the children's capacity for logical thinking and independent judgment fully awakens at this time. The authority of the class teacher gives way to the individual student's search for truth.

In the language arts there is an increasing emphasis on nuances of style and grammar in the student's expository and creative writing. Students read and study modern literature and works from across the curriculum, and produce a class play.

The mathematics curriculum concentrates on the application of arithmetic operations in practical and scientific situations, Algebra studies continue, and the students are introduced to the binary system, which made possible the development of computers. They learn the principles of solid geometry, and actually construct the five platonic solids.

The forward-looking impulse is best addressed in the main lesson, and in particular, the history curriculum. Whereas the seventh grade took as its theme the intellectual and aesthetic flowering of the Renaissance, the eighth grade is fully present in modern times. Its aim is to bring the accumulated image of world civilization up to the present day. Nothing characterizes the modern period better than the great revolutions—the industrial, political, and scientific revolutions that pulled down the old monarchical orders, and, in turn, gave rise to the struggles for individual freedoms and human rights. All these have had far-reaching cultural consequences, and it is important that the students consciously realize and appreciate this as they themselves are carried into the turmoil of adolescence.

The science curriculum in the eighth grade encompasses physics, chemistry and anatomy. The teacher demonstrates how the discovery and application of scientific principles contributed directly to the development of our modern technological society. In physics, the study of acoustics, optics, heat and electro-magnetism is extended through hydraulics and aeromechanics. The organic chemistry block covers sugars, starches, proteins, and fats-- focusing on those processes by which organic substances are formed (e.g., photosynthesis) and transformed (as in digestion). Health, hygiene and nutrition are also addressed.

Choral singing expands in the eighth grade to three and four-part harmonies to take advantage of the range of voices found in the adolescent class. The recorder program expands to include alto and tenor recorders, and instrumental ensembles take on more challenging work.

At the end of eighth grade, the students have successfully achieved the balance and intellectual curiosity necessary to step out into the greater world offered by high school--where the creative and developmentally-appropriate grade school curriculum is met and transformed into an intellectually-stimulating, college preparatory education.

Grade 8 Curriculum Components

- **Mathematics:** Continue Algebra; geometry; practical, technological, and scientific applications of mathematics
- **Language Arts:** Composition: essays, research reports, short stories, poetry
- **Literature:** short stories, poetry, Shakespearean drama
- **Science:** Physics; organic chemistry; human anatomy (muscles, bones, ears, eyes)
- **History & Social Studies:** The Age of Revolutions; American History; The Twentieth Century; Liberation Movements throughout the World; research reports
- **Geography:** Asian Geography
- **Handwork:** Machine sewing
- **Woodworking:** Developing authority and mastery of skills: may include creating a bench, chair or stool, relief carving, a box, dug-out canoe, and/or a gift to the school;
- **Foreign Language:** Continuing foreign language instruction with review and consolidation, re-telling stories, acting out dramas and plays, music and poetry, modern culture
- **Visual & Performing Arts:** Drawing; clay modeling; painting; portraiture; choir; recorder; instrumental ensemble, Shakespearean drama
- **Movement/Physical Education/Games:** team games and team building, trust building games, complex strategy