

Grade 7 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.)

The seventh grade can be a tremendously challenging and rewarding year for the children. The seventh grader stands on the brink of puberty. Not only are great physical changes taking place, but a major shift in cognitive development is also under way. The children are enthusiastic to express themselves and to assert their independence more strongly. Self-awareness and social relationships become a primary focus.

Historically, a similar period of change took place in Western civilization around the end of the fifteenth century. The study of the Renaissance, Reformation, and the Age of Exploration reflects what the children are experiencing within themselves. The children learn biographies of great figures who went against the traditional, prevailing views of their day in their own search for truth, freedom, and self-expression. Through studying the lives of Galileo, Martin Luther, Christopher Columbus, Elizabeth I, and others, the children find reassurance that in their struggle to become themselves they also can contribute to the world.

The Renaissance, which in Europe spans the years from 1400 to 1700, was the beginning of a whole new way of looking at the world. The transition from medieval to early modern thinking that this period exemplifies represents a change in consciousness from viewing the world as a symbolic representation of the spiritual world--to the empirical testing of the world through sense experiences. Exact measurement and factual accuracy and new conceptualizations of how the world works became central to thought and culture. Individualism found its expression in artistic and intellectual achievements. The European continent was overtaken by great intellectual and political upheavals, as the old world gave way to a striving to discover a new world both around and within themselves

In the **language arts**, the child will continue to develop and strengthen listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while studying biographical stories and written documents from the Age of Exploration, the Italian Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution. Expository and creative writing skills will be further expanded.

The basic concepts of **algebra and plane geometry** are the predominant subjects of the **mathematics** curriculum in the seventh grade. The general application and transformation of formulae and equations in practical life situations form a central part of mathematical study. Conscious work with geometric proofs continues, building up through triangles and parallelograms to deductive proofs of the Pythagorean theorem using shear, reflection, and rotation.

In the **sciences**, work continues with **physics**. In **mechanics**, simple machines are introduced: the lever, inclined plane, wedge, wheel and axle, pulley and screw. The concepts of effort and resistance are presented, and in their calculation the child is reinforced in his/her understanding of ratio. Work in **optics, heat, electricity, and magnetism** is extended, with an emphasis on the practical application of these phenomena.

The detailed observation of nature now leads the students back to a study of the human being. The seventh grade curriculum includes **physiology** units on the circulatory, respiratory, and nervous systems. At this age the children are particularly able to look at issues of health and nutrition in an objective way. The class considers those factors that foster health or illness in the human being, including an exploration of how various substances can promote one or the other condition.

Work with **chemistry** also begins in the seventh grade, with students examining the phenomena of combustion, the water cycle, and the nature of acids and bases. They discover through observation the properties of various substances and the ways in which they interrelate. Accurately executed descriptions and drawings are an integral part of this unit. In **physics** the children study the laws of refraction, reflection, heat, and electricity.

In the **arts**, perspective drawing on the study of both history and mathematics. The child learns how the Renaissance artists used the principles of geometry to develop the laws of perspective, and practices the application of these laws in original drawings. **Music** instruction is continued at a more advanced level with recorder, choral singing, and instrumental ensemble.

Grade 7 Curriculum Components

- **Math:** Algebra; mathematical thinking/theory; geometry proofs; introduction to mathematical uses of technology (using technology to analyze and present mathematical information)
- **Language Arts:** Creative writing; grammatical mechanics; critical thinking through study of literature and informational texts
- **Science:** Physics: mechanics; physiology: circulatory, respiratory and nervous systems; helio-centric astronomy; introduction to chemistry
- **History & Social Studies:** End of Middle Ages; Age of exploration; the Renaissance; projects and oral reports
- **Geography:** Geography of North and South America
- **Handwork:** Hand sewing, embroidery
- **Woodworking:** Initiation and Precision: May include bowl, metal-working, tool- making
- **Foreign Language:** Continuing foreign language with reading and writing, grammatical study and language structure, and historical and cultural study
- **Visual & Performing Arts:** Continuing music and drama; visual arts may include art history; calligraphy; clay modeling; perspective drawing; principles of drawing (negative space, texture, etc.); painting; soapstone carving
- **Movement/Physical Education/Games:** team games and team building, trust building games, complex strategy