



# STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

## EIGHTH GRADE

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It is my sincere hope that you will find this program overview helpful in understanding the curriculum and areas of emphasis of your child's grade level. While it is impossible to capture all the "richness" that goes into the daily education of our students, the overviews are designed to introduce the basic concepts and content standards.

The most important experiences are those that provide the opportunity to grow and be challenged. Many processes related to critical thinking and problem solving that are vital to student success happen every day. Another important aspect to our program is to continually evaluate, assess and improve the quality of the programs in the district. To that end, these program overviews have been reviewed and upgraded by teacher representatives in the district.

Our partnership with the parents of our district is paramount to the establishment of a desirable overall goal of success for every child. We will continue to maintain high expectations for our students and ourselves and we look forward to continued collaboration in the learning process of our students.

Thomas J. Lohwasser, Ed.D

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At the middle school, both the students and the subject matter intermingle to give the child a student-centered educational program. Human relationships are nurtured as students and teachers work together to develop a warm, friendly environment where students learn skills which enable them to perform as individuals and as part of a group.

#### The Eighth Grade Student:

- Displays a wide range of individual intellectual development as the mind experiences transition from the concrete-manipulatory stage to the capacity for abstract thought
- Prefers active over passive learning experiences; favors interaction with peers during learning activities
- Experiences accelerated physical development and matures at a rate which may differ widely from peers
- May be often erratic and inconsistent in his/her behavior, may be easily offended, and may be sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings
- May often experience traumatic conflicts due to conflicting loyalties to peer groups and family
- Often refers to peers as sources for standards and models of behavior
- Is essentially idealistic and has a strong sense of fairness in human relationships

#### The Eighth Grade Student Needs:

- To feel secure, accepted and understood by his/her peers, parents and teachers
- At least eight hours of sleep at night
- An opportunity to develop friendships both inside and outside of school

#### Parents Can Help By:

- Offering positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior and good school work efforts
- Providing a quiet place without distractions for studying and homework
- Helping your adolescent to accept responsibility for their academic success
- Being supportive and positive
- Encouraging your adolescent to read by setting aside time for family reading
- Encouraging open communication with your adolescent
- Making sure that your adolescent comes to school with necessary tools to work: paper, pencils, pens, and a well organized binder

The following is a short synopsis of the **California Academic Content Standards** for Language Arts, Mathematics, History/Social Science, and Science. Complete document available on the Internet at [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov) or at the Dixie School District.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### READING

**WORD ANALYSIS, FLUENCY, AND SYSTEMATIC VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT:** Students use their knowledge of word origins and word relationships, as well as historical and literary context clues, to determine the meaning specialized vocabulary and to understand the precise meaning of grade-level-appropriate words.

- Vocabulary and Concept Development

**READING COMPREHENSION (FOCUS ON INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS):** Students read and describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and organization, and purpose. In addition, by grade 8, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of grade-level-appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., magazines, newspapers, on-line information, classic and contemporary literature).

- Structural Features of Informational Materials
- Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text
- Expository Critique

**LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS:** Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature. They begin to find ways to clarify the ideas and make connection between literary works.

- Structural Features of Literature
- Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text
- Literary Criticism.

### WRITING

**WRITING STRATEGIES:** Students write clear, coherent, and focused essays. The writing exhibits the students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students successfully use the stages of the writing process, as needed.

- Organization and Focus
- Research and Technology
- Evaluation and Revision

**WRITING APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS):** Students write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive text of at least 500 to 700 words in each genre. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the research, organizational, and drafting strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0.

- Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, and/or narratives
- Write responses to literature
- Write research reports
- Write persuasive compositions
- Write documents related to career development, including simple business letters and job applications
- Write technical documents that explain a complex operation or situation

**WRITTEN AND ORAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS:** Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions that are appropriate to this grade level.

|                    |                |          |
|--------------------|----------------|----------|
| Sentence Structure | Punctuation    |          |
| Grammar            | Capitalization | Spelling |

### LISTENING AND SPEAKING

**LISTENING AND SPEAKING:** Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

- Comprehension
- Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication
- Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications

**SPEAKING APPLICATIONS (GENRES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS):** Students deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, exposition, persuasion, and description). Student speaking demonstrates command of standard English and the organization and delivery strategies outlined in Listening and Speaking Standard 1.0.

- Deliver narrative presentations
- Deliver oral responses to literature
- Deliver research presentations
- Deliver persuasive presentations
- Recite poems of four to six stanzas, sections of speeches, or dramatic soliloquies

## MATHEMATICS

All eighth graders will be enrolled in either Algebra 1A, Algebra 1, or Geometry. Algebra 1A is the first year of a two-year algebra course. The second year will be completed in high school. The Algebra 1 program for accelerated students is equivalent to a full year of high school algebra. In addition, we offer one section of high school level Geometry for eighth graders who have successfully completed Algebra 1 in seventh grade.

In the study of algebra, a student develops an understanding of the symbolic language of mathematics and the sciences. In addition, algebraic skill and concepts are developed and used in a wide variety of problem solving situations. The Algebra course will prepare students to enter second year high school Algebra and Geometry courses. Topics will include: real, rational and irrational numbers, solving equations and inequalities, operations with polynomials, factoring polynomials, ratios and proportions, graphing of linear and quadratic functions, solutions of quadratic equations.

In the Geometry course, the primary goal is to help students develop basic knowledge of geometry, reasoning skills, problem solving strategies and mathematical connections. Topics covered in the course will include geometric art, inductive and deductive reasoning, using tools of geometry, transformations, Pythagorean Theorem, properties of lines, angles, triangles, polygons, and circles, perimeter, area, and volume, similarity, direct and indirect proofs.

## HISTORY/SOCIAL SCIENCE

The social studies curriculum in eighth grade is based on an interdisciplinary approach to the teaching of history and social studies. The subject matter is presented as an exploratory, discovery, activity based program. Learning how to apply critical thinking skills is a major goal of the program and the subject matter is integrated with other curricular areas. Connections are made between events in the past, the present, and the future. Students are asked to draw conclusions about historical events and to act as participants in the democratic process.

In eighth grade, the students study the history and geography of the U.S. from European settlement to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The focus is on the rights of the individual vs. society, significant changes in culture during the events of the period--such as the Constitution, Civil War, Immigration, and the Industrial Revolution--the study of the geography of the time and the study of the values of the time period. Students will come to realize that American society is multi-cultural and pluralistic, and that the writing of the Constitution created our democratic form of government. They will learn about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens of the era and compare them to our rights and responsibilities today.

The unit headings under which eighth grade social studies is presented include: Colonial Heritage, Conflict Resolution, Constitution, Westward Expansion 1800-1850, Emerging Sectionalism, Civil War/Reconstruction, Emerging Industrialism and its impact on early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## SCIENCE

The eighth grade science program represents a balance of content and process. Major scientific concepts are emphasized in a variety of areas--human biology, physics, energy, geology, weather, and technology. The scientific process is emphasized through inquiry-based experiences which include experiments, long term projects, and scientific activities. Practical scientific application of multimedia is integrated into the science curriculum. Human biology, as it applies to substance abuse prevention, nutrition, and growth and development, is discussed.

The major areas of study are: Human Biology; Motion, Forces and Energy; and Earth Sciences.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The eighth grade Physical Education program is designed to provide overall physical development including: cardiovascular strength, flexibility, and an increase in muscular tone. Students' self-esteem is nurtured throughout the middle school years by positive reinforcement and progressive skill development. Good sportsmanship and cooperation are emphasized in all activities. Particular emphasis is placed upon instilling interest and enthusiasm for fitness and sports as an integral part of each student's life.

## ELECTIVES

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE:** Foreign language at Miller Creek is taught audio-lingually, emphasizing the four skills that are essential to language learning: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students continually build vocabulary and increase their facility with grammar forms, which enable them to converse at an elementary level. To adequately prepare them for continuation of the language in high school, students are held

accountable for written accuracy of the oral language forms that have been presented and learned.

A variety of instructional techniques are used, including presenting dialogues, short plays or skits. By the second year of study, students write short themes on assigned topics and summaries of films which have been used to teach vocabulary or cultural information.

French and Spanish are highly academic electives. Students should have good grades in English and strong study habits. Frequent oral and written assignments are required to help the students master new language forms. By the end of our two year course of study, nearly all of the students will be able to do well in the 3/4 level of foreign language offered at Terra Linda High School. The most serious Spanish students will be prepared to enroll in the High School Honors Spanish.

**MUSIC:** Elective classes are offered daily in advanced levels of band, orchestra, and chorus. Concert and festival performances increase students' reading and performance skills.

**BAND:** The eighth grade band is our most advanced wind ensemble. Increased technical agility, tone quality, and musical expression are incorporated into the performance of advanced band literature. Section leaders from the eighth grade band join the 7/8th grade symphonic orchestra as the wind and percussion sections.

**ORCHESTRA:** Literature for full symphonic orchestra as well as string orchestra is part of the 7/8th grade orchestra curriculum. Guest wind and percussion players from the 8th grade band join the strings to produce a full symphonic orchestra. Instruction in more advanced orchestra procedures occurs at this time.

**CHORUS:** The 7/8th grade choruses experience a greater complexity of music than in sixth grade: expanded music reading skills, as well as small ensemble work. Music from a variety of sources develops into musical interpretation with emphasis on expression, good choral tone, and careful use of dynamics.

**DRAMA:** The drama program is one which, by its integration into the ongoing school curriculum, reflects and enlivens the traditional body of middle school learning. Beginning with interpreting drama, the students work with improvisation, pantomime, voice and diction and "ACTING," bringing a play to life. As well as all the warm-ups, games and exercises, the students memorize script for character and scene development. There is also some theatre history and play reading, culminating in participation in the school play. The students also keep an "actor's log" throughout the year.

**ADVANCED ART:** Advanced Art is composed of both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Students may take this class 2 years consecutively without repeating projects.

The curriculum will emphasize the universal elements of artistic expression. The theme of the history of art will be woven into the projects that are presented. Concepts such as aesthetic perception, creative expression, historical/cultural context and aesthetic valuing will be stressed.

Students will be expected to build an extensive vocabulary consisting of the names of well-known artists and their style. A working knowledge of the names of media, equipment and techniques will also be required. Advanced art students will be required to complete each art project to the best of their ability. Following the teacher's instruction while expressing individual creative style will also be expected.

**CROSS-AGE TUTORING:** This 2-period elective is an opportunity for students to become Teacher Assistants at one of the local elementary schools. The time commitment includes lunch, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> periods.

**STUDY SKILLS:** An opportunity for students to work on homework. Course offered pass/fail only.

### LIBRARY

Miller Creek Library has many resources available for students, including 14,000 books, magazines, daily newspaper, videos, CD-ROM's and the Internet. The library is open from 7:40 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Wednesday and from 7:40 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

### HOMEWORK POLICY

Homework is defined as an assigned activity that is primarily accomplished outside of regular class time. Such work shall be appropriate to the grade level, subject matters, and instructional objective(s); in general, the amount of time spent on homework shall increase as the student progresses through the grades.

**Purpose and benefits of homework can include:**

1. Extend or make more meaningful concepts introduced at school.
2. Engage students in purposeful practice relevant to their learning.
3. Develop effective study habits.
4. Develop independent learning skills.

Each school follows the District Administrative Regulations and Policy as well as follows the site specific Homework Guidelines.

### REPORTING TO PARENTS

In the middle of each grading period, progress reports are sent home to parents of students whose grades are in jeopardy.

Report cards are mailed in December, March and June. Additionally, a parent conference will be held in October and teachers contact individual parents as the need arises.

### STUDENT PROMOTION/RETENTION CRITERIA

The following multiple promotion criteria for reading, writing, listening/speaking, and mathematics applies to students in grades 6-8 for each quarter:

Performance Grades

Each student's overall classroom progress, quality of work, and participation must be grade "D" or above.

Achievement Toward Standards

Each student's "Achievement Toward Standards" must be "on grade level" or "pass" level.

STAR Testing: California Standards Tests

Student scores in English/Language Arts and Mathematics should at the Basic level or above.

### SUPPORT SERVICES

The Dixie School District provides resource specialists for Special Education, English Language Development, counseling and psychological services. The district also offers an enriched learning program for gifted ad talented students. Teachers in

P.E., art, music and computers enhance the educational experience at various sites.

### DISTRICT TESTING SCHEDULE

| Testing                                      | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dixie/State Standards Testing                | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| STAR Testing: CA Standards Test (CST)        |   |   | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program |   |   |   | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| State Physical Fitness                       |   |   |   |   |   | X |   | X |   |
| State Writing Assessment                     |   |   |   |   | X |   |   | X |   |
| CA English Language Development Test         | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Healthy Kids Survey*                         |   |   |   |   |   | X |   | X |   |

NOTE: Additional testing for various programs occurs throughout grade levels as needed.

\* Survey may be administered every two years.

### DIXIE ADOPTED BASIC TEXTBOOKS

| Subject                  | Publisher   |
|--------------------------|---|
| LANGUAGE ARTS            | <i>Literature and Language Art</i> , Holt, Rinehart and Winston<br>Various core novels<br><i>High Point (Intervention)</i><br>Hampton-Brown |
| ALGEBRA 1A and ALGEBRA 1 | <i>California Algebra 1</i><br>Glencoe/McGraw-Hill  |
| GEOMETRY                 | <i>Geometry: Applying, Reasoning, Measuring</i> , McDougal Littell  |
| SCIENCE                  | <i>Focus of Physical Science</i> , Pearson Prentice Hall, Inc.  |
| SOCIAL STUDIES           | <i>Creating America</i> , McDougal Littell  |
| FOREIGN LANGUAGE         | <i>Dis-Moi!</i> (Level 1), Scott-Foresman<br><i>Spanish for Mastery</i> , D. C. Heath   |

### HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

All students must have an up-to-date written record of immunization.

The District Code of Conduct  
Be Safe.  
Be Responsible.  
Be Respectful.