



# **VISTA VERDE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

### **2005-2006**

#### **6TH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED CLASSES**

**MATH:** Using the California Mathematics Framework, the State Board of Education Mathematics Standards, and the Irvine School District Math Standards as our guide, our program offers students opportunities to learn large mathematical ideas and their interconnections, to communicate their mathematical thinking in a variety of ways, to develop thinking and problem solving skills, to maintain basic computational skills through the introduction of new topics, and to use technology as a tool in problem calculation and presentation. Typical topics include fractions, decimals, ratios and proportions, percents, statistics and data collection, introduction to integers, basic geometry, introduction to equations and functions. Opportunities exist for students to take courses in Pre-Algebra or Algebra.

**SOCIAL STUDIES:** Using the California Social Studies Framework and the Irvine School District History/Social Science Content Standards, our program offers students opportunities to expand their understanding of history by studying the cultural universals that ushered in the dawn of the major western and non-western ancient civilizations. Continued emphasis is placed on the circumstances that influenced events, on the problems and achievements of people, on the development of social, economic, and political structures, and on the spreading ideas that transformed the world. Students develop higher levels of thinking by considering why civilizations developed and declined, by analyzing the interactions between peoples and cultures, and by recognizing the enduring contributions of the past to the present.

**LANGUAGE ARTS/READING:** Classes are literature based and thematically organized. The program incorporates significant literary works and emphasizes not only the integration of thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills but also a multidisciplinary integration of the total sixth grade curriculum. Students encounter literature from many genres and receive a mixture of culturally diverse works. Reading instruction includes novel studies, anthologies, and expository texts. Writing instruction will follow the writing process and will take students from pre-writing through revision and ultimate publications. Spelling and language mechanics are taught through direct instruction. Students are accountable for spelling and mechanics in all written assignments. Student assessment will include written assignments, research-based projects, comprehension questions, and open-ended projects. Students will be provided opportunities to integrate technology through word-processing and use of the Internet.

**SCIENCE:** The sixth grade science program is a year of science process skills, dynamic earth, oceanography and science fair. The curriculum is aligned with the state's new science framework. Emphasis is on making the connections and seeing the relationships between concepts and ideas. The interdisciplinary thematic teaching approach helps students investigate high interest problems that show students how scientific principles are applied. The science specialist will stress scientific thinking processes and strive to help students develop critical thinking skills with problem solving, decision-making, and research and inquiry. As students move through the program, they tackle more sophisticated thinking processes using experimental manipulative and other laboratory oriented projects that are related to current scientific issues. Computer technology is used as a tool to support student projects. A science specialist teaches Science one day a week for ninety minutes. The classroom teacher guides the students through the textbook materials.

**MUSIC EXPLORATORY:** All 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are required to enroll in a full year of music. Choice are vocal, band, or orchestra. Students may enroll in a second exploratory only if they are also enrolled in ZERO period pe.

#### **7TH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED CLASSES**

**INTRO TO PRE-ALGEBRA:** Using the California Mathematics Framework, the State Board of Education Mathematics Standards, and the Irvine School District Math Standards as our guides, our program offers students opportunities to consolidate their skills in mathematical calculations and problem solving, to communicate their mathematical thinking in a variety of ways such as written work and verbalizations, to develop their thinking, organizational, and abstraction skills. Typical topics include fractions, decimals, percents, integers, basic geometry, beginning equations, statistics and graphing. This course is specifically for students who are not yet ready for Pre-Algebra in their 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but opportunities exist for them to explore topics in Pre-Algebra or to transition into Pre-Algebra if warranted by testing and individual performance

**PRE-ALGEBRA:** Using the California Mathematics Framework, the State Board of Education Mathematics Standards, and the Irvine School District Math Standards as our guide, our program offers students opportunities to learn large mathematical ideas and their interconnections, to communicate their mathematical thinking in a variety of ways, to develop thinking and problem solving skills, and to use technology as a tool in problem calculation and presentation. Emphasis is on justification of answers with supporting evidence. Typical topics include equations, percent applications, data analysis, functions, and advanced geometric topics. This course is specifically designed for students who have demonstrated proficiency in basic calculations and problem solving, but opportunities exist for them to explore topics in Algebra or to transition into Algebra if warranted by testing or performance.

**HONORS ALGEBRA:** Using the California Mathematics Framework, the State Board of Education Mathematics Standards, and the Irvine School District Math Standards as our guide, our program offers students opportunities to learn large algebraic ideas and their interconnections to mathematical operations, to communicate their mathematical thinking in a variety of ways, to develop thinking and critical thinking skills, to maintain basic computational skills, and to use technology as a tool in problem calculation and presentation. Typical topics include symbolic language, functions, multiple representations (diagrams, models, tables, graphs, and symbols) which allow students to understand and solve problems in a variety of ways, first and second degree equations and their graphs, rational numbers, exponents, and radical expressions. Opportunities exist for students to take courses in Geometry at the high school.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE:** Seventh grade students study World Cultures and Geography as they learn about Medieval and Early Times. The goal of the course is for students to learn about democracy, civic values, social participation, content knowledge, cultural understanding and skill attainment. Units of study include the growth of Islam, Sub-Sahara Africa, Japan, Imperial China, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, Age of Exploration, and the Enlightenment Period.

**SCIENCE:** The seventh grade science program consists of two trimesters of an integrated life science curriculum that is aligned with the state's framework and standards and one trimester of a district-approved health and family-life curriculum. The scientific method and scientific thinking processes are used to help students develop logical thinking skills. Projects in which students apply the scientific principles learned in class are intended to develop critical thinking skills. Many strategies are used to enhance the curriculum such as science labs, computer technology, reports, oral presentations, cooperative learning activities, and optional science projects.

**LANGUAGE ARTS:** The seventh grade Language Arts curriculum prepares students to master the California reading standards by helping them build skills in reading comprehension, literary response and analysis, and vocabulary development. Students grow to understand how different structures are used to communicate meaning through the reading of culturally and historically significant literary works. Students read novels, short stories, essays and poetry. Reading skills, literary analysis and higher-level comprehension work is incorporated, using the California State Standards as a guide. Students are encouraged to do extensive free choice reading in addition to the required assigned reading.

The writing component of the Language Arts curriculum focuses on different kinds of writing, such as narration, exposition, persuasion, research and response to literature. Students choose the form of writing best suited to the purpose, develop strategies for organizing support for their main ideas or theses, and learn strategies for evaluating and revising and for using word-processing programs to refine and publish their work.

## **8TH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED CLASSES**

**INTRO TO ALGEBRA:** Using the California Mathematics Framework, the State Board of Education Mathematics Standards, the Irvine School District Math Standards, and the Irvine School District Grade Level Transition Timeline as our guide, our program offers students opportunities to learn large mathematical ideas and their interconnections, to communicate their mathematical thinking in a variety of ways, to develop thinking and problem solving skills, and to use technology as a tool in problem calculation and presentation. Emphasis is on justification of answers with supporting evidence. Typical topics include equations, percent applications, data analysis, functions, and advanced geometric topics. This course is specifically designed for students who have demonstrated proficiency in basic calculations and problem solving, but opportunities exist for them to explore topics in Algebra or to transition into Algebra if warranted by testing or performance.

**ALGEBRA:** Using the California Mathematics Framework, the State Board of Education Mathematics Standards, and the Irvine School District Math Standards as our guide, our program offers students opportunities to learn large algebraic ideas and their interconnections to mathematical operations, to communicate their mathematical thinking in a variety of

ways, to develop thinking and critical thinking skills, to maintain basic computational skills, and to use technology as a tool in problem calculation and presentation. Typical topics include symbolic language, functions, multiple representations (diagrams, models, tables, graphs, and symbols) which allow students to understand and solve problems in a variety of ways, first and second degree equations and their graphs, rational numbers, exponents, and radical expressions. Opportunities exist for students to take courses in Honors Geometry at the high school.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE:** Eighth grade students study U.S. History and Geography as they learn about growth and conflict. The goal of the course is for students to learn about democracy, civic values, social participation, content knowledge, cultural understanding and skill attainment. Units include our Colonial Heritage, the American Revolution, the Constitution, the divergent paths of the American people (1800-1850), the Civil War, and the Rise of Industrial America. Since 2004 is an election year, eighth grade students will participate in a voter's simulation. This program is repeated ever four years.

**SCIENCE:** Eighth grade science consists of the study of Physical Science and Chemistry. Students continue to build upon scientific skills and concepts introduced in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Some of the units of study include: waves, motion, forces and matter.

**LANGUAGE ARTS:** The eighth grade Language Arts program is logically organized and systematically sequenced so that students build the skills and master the content required by the California standards. The curriculum is centered on building the knowledge and skills required by the Reading, Writing and Listening and Speaking standards.

The Reading instruction covers standards in vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and literary response and analysis. Writing instruction covers standards instruction in writing strategies, writing applications, listening and speaking strategies, and speaking applications. Instruction focuses on different kinds of writing, such as narration, exposition, persuasion, research and response to literature. Students choose the form of writing best suited to the purpose, develop strategies for organizing support for their main ideas or theses, and learn strategies for evaluating and revising and for using word-processing programs to refine and publish their work.

## **SIXTH - EIGHTH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF CORE ELECTIVES**

**SIXTH - EIGHTH GRADE ELECTIVES:** Provide students with an opportunity to participate in a variety of enjoyable and challenging activities in a structured and positive environment. Students experience a variety of intellectual, creative, artistic, and physical forms. An attempt is made to offer different electives each trimester. Priority is given to students in the higher grades.

**SIXTH - EIGHTH GRADE PHYSICAL EDUCATION:** Physical education is offered to all middle school students. They are encouraged to develop their skills, interest, and sportsmanship. Our physical education curriculum stresses warming up and conditioning, as well as team sports, and includes guided play periods, exercising, recreation time, and sport/fitness instruction.

### **YEAR-LONG ELECTIVES:**

- **Concert Band:** (6-8) The Intermediate Band class is a one-year course of study that offers instruction on flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, trumpet, trombone, baritone and percussion. This class is designed for sixth-grade students who have received at least one year of instruction, for seventh or eighth grade students who want to better their skills, or for any student who would like to begin a new instrument. A limited number of school owned instruments are available but most students will need to obtain their own. The class includes at least three evening performances.
- **Symphonic Band:** (6-8) The Wind Ensemble is an ensemble for wind and percussion students who are of the highest caliber at Vista Verde School. It is open to eighth grade students, advanced seventh grade students, and a limited number of sixth grade students that may enter by permission of the instructor only. Besides our three evening performances, class activities include Honor Orchestra audition preparation and possible off-campus field trips. A limited number of school owned instruments are available but most students will need to obtain their own.
- **Symphonic Orchestra:** The Symphonic Orchestra is comprised of experienced musicians who play violin, viola, cello, or string bass. This orchestra is for the dedicated musician, interested in excelling in their art form. Entrance

into symphonic orchestra is by audition only. A wide variety of repertoire and concepts will be learned and performed in accordance with the California Visual and Performing Arts Frameworks.

- Concert Orchestra: The Concert Orchestra consists of students who have experience on a string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or string bass). In the Concert Orchestra, students will continue to work towards mastering string skills such as tuning, shifting, and vibrato. More advanced bowing articulations and rhythmic patterns will be introduced. A wide variety of repertoire and concepts will be learned and performed in accordance with the California Visual and Performing Arts Frameworks. Those students with no experience are welcome but should see Miss Maruko for approval.
- Vista Verde Singers: (6) is a full year course designed for the student with previous or limited choral experience (elementary, community or church choir). The course of study includes sight singing, rhythm, listening skills, good tone production, stage presence, and experiencing a variety of authentic musical literature which will include: Classical, Folk, Spiritual, Broadway, Patriotic, and Multi-Cultural pieces. This performing group will demonstrate their musicianship at festivals, community, and school performances. Students who participate are eligible to audition for Middle School Honor Chorus. In addition, students who participate in this yearlong program will have priority to participate given a successful audition in our annual Musical Theatre or Revue Performance.
- Vista Verde Ensemble: (7-8) is a full year course designed for the student with previous choral experience (elementary, middle, community or church choir). The course of study includes sight singing, rhythm, listening skills, good tone production, stage presence, and experiencing a variety of authentic musical literature which will include: Classical, Folk, Spiritual, Broadway, Patriotic, and Multi-Cultural pieces. This performing group will demonstrate their musicianship at festivals, community, and school performances. Students who participate are eligible to audition for Middle School Honor Chorus. In addition, students who participate in this yearlong program will have priority to participate given a successful audition in our annual Musical Theatre or Revue Performance.

#### **TRIMESTER ELECTIVES:**

- Applied Technology: Students will be engaged in self-directed learning stations called “modules.” The students will discover possible career choices and gain a better understanding of some of the technologies used in business and industry. Sample units (modules) include structures, computer-aided drafting and design, solar energy and power, rocketry and flight, architectural designs, and manufacturing. *Supply fee: \$20.00.*
- Ceramics and Design: This course will include basic hand building and slab rolling techniques. Surface decoration and glazing techniques will be included. *Lab fee: \$10.00.*
- Community Service: Students research and visit several community service programs. Guest speakers and presentations are frequently included. Students are responsible for school-wide participation in holiday service opportunities.
- Computer Technology: Students will learn Microsoft Office applications including FrontPage 2000. Students will also learn Internet research skills, hyper stack studio, webpage building, and presentation skills. Software applications may include content specific applications such as mathematics, science, social science, and writing criterions on-line. Basic hardware problem solving is also covered.
- Culinary Arts: Students will learn recipes and cook foods that can be duplicated at home. Students will also learn basic cooking skills and meal planning. *Supply Fee: \$10.00.*
- Exploring Line and Color: Students will learn the necessary skills for drawing and painting. Students will create a sketchbook of ideas, discover the color wheel, paint a picture suitable for framing, and explore other art applications. *Supply fee: \$5.00.*
- Journalism/Yearbook: Students learn basic publishing, layout design and writing for publication. A school newspaper/magazine will be published in addition to producing the Vista Verde School Yearbook. Students will also learn Microsoft Publisher 2000 and web page design using Microsoft Front Page 2000.

- **Keyboarding:** An introductory class designed for beginning piano students. Learn the basics of reading music, and playing simple songs. Keyboards will be provided at school for practice. It is not necessary to have a keyboard at home, but it would be helpful for practice purposes. *Limited enrollment.*
- **Office Assistant/Teacher Aide:** Students will learn clerical and receptionist “skills on the job.” Students may also be assigned a teacher to assist with classroom management such as bulletin boards, filing, copying, etc. Attention to detail is a must! *This class requires a teacher recommendation or office interview.*
- **Public Speech and Debate:** Students will be instructed on how to construct and present a speech. Emphasis will be given on personal appearance, body language, and enunciation. Ample opportunity will be given to students to present in front of an audience. Students will also learn to research, analyze, present, argue and defend principles concerning topics ranging from historical interpretation to current events.
- **Reading:** (6-8) Students in this class will receive systematic reading instruction in comprehension, word attack skills, vocabulary and syntax. Students will read materials from subject areas and materials that are teacher selected to apply strategies learned in class. Students will also have the opportunity, with teacher guidance, of choosing materials to read. This class will take the place of a trimester exploratory class in the student’s daily schedule. Enrollment is limited and priority will be based on student needs.

### **Other Middle School Student Programs:**

- **Academic Pentathlon:** (6-8) is an exciting five-event competition for Middle School students. Founded by the Orange County Department of Education, the competition encourages and rewards academic excellence among students of all ability levels. *Parent volunteers coordinate this program.*
- **Advisement:** (6-8) is a full year experience for all our middle school students. Advisement meets twice a week. The program is designed to assist students in all aspects of life during the middle school years. The emphasis of the Advisement Program is developing a one-to-one relationship between advisor and student. The goal of the program is to develop skills for social interaction, personal assessment, educational planning, life skill awareness, study skills and time management, universal values/ethics, and decision-making. Advisement includes goal-setting conferences with the advisor, the parent(s), and the student to establish mutual academic and school goals. Advisement meetings foster a sense of belonging to a particular group, and also serve as a source of intra-school spirit competitions. The advisor’s goal is to maintain strong communication between home and school regarding all aspects of the child’s experience at school.
- **Club Viking:** (6-8) is a full year experience for students who have been selected by staff to be a Club Viking volunteer. Students in this program work with elementary students during physical education as facilitators. Students meet with the Club Viking Advisor periodically to train, plan, and organize student physical education activity programs for the school year.
- **Conflict Management:** (6-8) is a full year experience for students who have been selected by staff and peers to be a Conflict Manager. Conflict Management is a student-centered program that trains students in conflict management/problem-solving skills to assist other students (K-8) in positive conflict resolution. Students in this class meet during school (Advisement period), periodically before and after school to train, plan, and organize student activity programs for the school year such as valet parking, Peer Mediation, and team building activities for K-8 students.
- **Leadership:** (6-8) is a full year experience for students who have been elected by their peers to Student Council. Students in this class meet as an advisory, periodically before and after school, and during lunch periods to plan and organize the student activities programs for the school year such as assemblies, spirit activities and dances. *Prerequisite: Election to Student Council.*
- **Musical Theatre/Stage Production:** (6-8) students will participate in a full musical theatre production including light, sound, and stage production. Students will incorporate song, dance, and choreography to perform a selected Broadway play to the Vista Verde community. Auditions are generally held during the first trimester. Some costume fees may apply.

- Science Camp: (6) Each year, the sixth grade class spends a week with the Orange County Department of Education sponsored Science Camp in the San Bernardino Mountains.
- Toyon: (7-8) Honor students from grades 7 and 8 are invited to spend time at Catalina Island's Camp Toyon. Participation is select and by teacher recommendation.
- Yearbook Production: (7-8) Students will learn basic writing, layout design and publishing for publication. A school newspaper/magazine will be published in addition to producing the Vista Verde School Yearbook. Students will also learn Microsoft Publisher 2000 and web page design using Microsoft Front Page 2000.