



**VISTA VERDE MIDDLE SCHOOL
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
2011 – 2012**



6TH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED CLASSES

MATH: 6th grade math is a comprehensive course aligned with the California Mathematics Content Standards. A strong emphasis is placed on problem solving and communicating mathematics in a variety of different ways including technology. Students will experience algebraic reasoning in equation solving and graphing functions, operations using integers and rational numbers, number theory, proportional relationships, applying percents, collecting, displaying and analyzing data, probability, measurement and geometry. This course is designed to prepare students for pre-algebra in the 7th grade. Opportunities will be given to take Pre-Algebra or Honors Algebra through IUSD placement testing. To qualify for Pre-Algebra, a 5th Grade student must score 80% or better on the Middle School Math Placement Test. To qualify for Algebra I, a 5th Grade student must score 80% or better on the Middle School Math Placement Test, have completed the Pre-Algebra textbook with their 5th Grade teacher, **and** score 75% or better on the Algebra Placement Test.

SOCIAL STUDIES: Using the California Social Studies Framework, the Irvine School District History/Social Science Content Standards, we offer students the chance to begin to expand their understanding of history by studying the birth of the major western and non-western ancient civilizations. Continued emphasis is placed on the geography, religion, achievements, political system, economy, and social structures of each unique culture. The goal is to learn the social, cultural, and technological changes that occurred around the world during this time period. Videos, art, symbolism, language, performance and simulations are incorporated at every turn to involve students more fully. Assignments are tailored to encourage the development of note-taking, organization, critical thinking skills, and expression and are designed to prepare the students for success in the next level of classes.

GATE/Challenge: Embedded into the above curriculum are constant opportunities for motivated students to extend, deepen and connect their understandings through open ended assignments present in every unit, such as interdisciplinary projects. This opportunity enables differentiation for the GATE identified student to develop higher level thinking skills that are specific to social science, for example: thinking skills such as chronological thinking, examining evidence, and consideration on multiple perspectives through interpretation and analysis of historical/geographical significance.

LANGUAGE ARTS/READING: Classes are literature based and are aligned with the social studies curriculum. 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.

GATE/Challenge: GATE identified student curriculum is differentiated and accelerated through a variety of practices. Students work inside and outside the classroom on enrichment projects using cluster grouping, individual research, and a pull-out program. Most assignments require investigation, project creation, and presentation components and are based on the current literary or cultural topic of the classroom curriculum. Projects include a deeper analysis of the content being studied with links between reading and writing. Although most teaching is done in a heterogeneous environment, GATE instruction is individualized based on the skills and abilities presented by each child.

SCIENCE: The sixth grade science program is a year of science process skills, earth science, ecology, ocean ecosystem and science fair. The curriculum is aligned with the state's 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. Sixth graders are required by the district to complete a science fair project.

Note: All 6th grade students are required to enroll in music. Choices are Band, Orchestra, Vocal Ensemble/Art & Middle School Chorus. Instructor approval is required for Vocal Ensemble, Symphonic Band, and Symphonic Orchestra.

7TH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED CLASSES

INTRODUCTION TO PRE-ALGEBRA: This 7th grade course is aligned with the California Mathematics Content Standards. A strong emphasis is placed on problem solving and being able to present mathematical ideas in a variety of ways including technology. In this class, students will be continuing to develop and strengthen their mathematical understanding in algebra concepts with integers and equation solving, operations with rational numbers, performing multi-step equations and inequalities, exponents, ratios, proportions and percents, graphing, geometry, statistics and probability. After completion of this course, students will have the opportunity to take Honors Algebra or Transitional Algebra in the 8th grade.

PRE-ALGEBRA: This course is aligned with the California Mathematics Content Standards. A strong emphasis is placed on problem solving, developing algebraic thinking and presenting mathematical ideas in a variety of ways including technology. In this course, students will cover principles of algebra in evaluating expressions, operations with integers and equation solving, operations and equations with rational numbers, perform multi-step equations, inequalities, exponents and square roots, similarity, ratio, proportions and percents, graphing linear, quadratic and cubic functions, two and three dimensional geometry, statistics and probability as well as preview algebra with an introduction to polynomials. This course is designed to prepare students for Honors Algebra in the 8th grade. To qualify for Pre-Algebra, a 6th Grade student must score 80% or better on the Middle School Math Placement Test.

HONORS ALGEBRA: This honors level course is aligned with the California Mathematics Content Standards. In this class, there is a strong emphasis on problem solving and mathematical reasoning. Students will continue to develop and present algebraic thinking and abstract concepts in a variety of ways including technology. This course will cover foundations of algebra, solving complex equations and inequalities, graphing and using linear functions, solving systems of equations and inequalities, using properties with exponents, multiplying and factoring polynomials, quadratic functions and equations, functions and equations with rational numbers. Students will have the opportunity to preview concepts in Geometry and Algebra II. Students who successfully complete this course will be prepared for Honors Geometry taken at the high school campus. To qualify for Algebra I, a 7th Grade student must pass the middle school placement test followed by the Algebra Readiness Test.

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.

GATE/Challenge: In addition to the above curriculum optional "Challenge" assignments are offered to all students. "Challenge" assignments consist of opportunities for students to learn at an accelerated pace, work on advanced curriculum and explore the curriculum in a manner that supports abstract thinking, problem-solving, use of higher order thinking skills such as synthesis, analysis and evaluation, and critical thinking. This opportunity enables a gifted student to experience open-ended learning and to explore areas of passionate interest. Examples of "Challenge" assignments during our African unit would be for students to investigate: the diamond/tanzanite trade, exotic diseases of the Sudan, and royal gold of the Asante.

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 building skills in reading comprehension, literary response and analysis, and vocabulary development. Etymology is an important component of vocabulary instruction. 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.

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, revising, and using word-processing programs to refine and publish their work. Spelling, grammar, and language mechanics are taught through direct instruction.

GATE/Challenge: Challenge opportunities are provided through enrichment projects for each unit of study. Novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* and plays such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are assigned. Students are encouraged to do extensive free choice reading in addition to the assigned reading and extra credit is given for classics.

8TH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF REQUIRED CLASSES

TRANSITIONAL ALGEBRA: This 8th grade level course is aligned with the California Mathematics Content Standards for Algebra Readiness. A strong emphasis is placed on problem solving, solidifying mathematical concepts and being able to present them in a variety of ways including technology. This class will cover variable and algebraic expressions, integers and absolute value, equation solving, operations with rational numbers, ratios, proportions and percents, linear functions and graphing, solving inequalities and properties of exponents. Students that successfully complete this course will be prepared to take Algebra I in the 9th grade.

HONORS ALGEBRA: This honors level course is aligned with the California Mathematics Content Standards. In this class, there is a strong emphasis on problem solving and mathematical reasoning. Students will continue to develop and present algebraic thinking and abstract concepts in a variety of ways including technology. This course will cover foundations of algebra, solving complex equations and inequalities, graphing and using linear functions, solving systems of equations and inequalities, using properties with exponents, multiplying and factoring polynomials, quadratic functions and equations, functions and equations with rational numbers. Students will have the opportunity to preview concepts in Geometry and Algebra II. Students who successfully complete this course will be prepared for high school Honors Geometry/Geometry in the 9th grade. To qualify for Algebra I, a 7th Grade student must pass the Middle School Placement Test followed by the Algebra Readiness Test.

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 American history with emphasis on the development of America's social, economic, and political structures. Continued emphasis is placed on the circumstances that influenced events, the problems and achievements of people, and the spreading of humanist's ideas that transformed the United States and the World.

GATE/Challenge: In addition to the above curriculum optional "Challenge" assignments are offered to all students. "Challenge" assignments enable students to experience open-ended learning and to explore areas of passionate interest.

SCIENCE: Eighth grade science consists of the study of Physical Science and Chemistry. Students develop the logical reasoning and critical thinking skills of the scientific method while learning a variety of laboratory procedures and techniques. Some of the units of study include: motion, forces and matter, acids, bases, the periodic table and astronomy. Students wishing to be placed into Honors Science at the high school level need to complete a science fair project as well as maintain an A average throughout the year.

LANGUAGE ARTS: The eighth grade language arts program is organized so that students build the skills needed to master the content required by the California standards. Reading instruction covers standards in vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and literary analysis and response. Students read a variety of genres including short stories, essays, novels, and poetry. Direct instruction is provided for spelling, grammar, and language mechanics. Etymology is an important component of the program.

The writing curriculum covers instruction in strategies and 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, revising and using word-processing programs to refine and publish their work.

GATE/Challenge: Challenge opportunities are provided through enrichment projects for each unit of study. Novels such as Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*, and Fahrenheit 451 are assigned. Additional novels assigned are George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Howard Fast's *April Morning*, and Michael Shaara's *Killer Angels*. Students work independently in a high school literature book that corresponds to the social studies curriculum. Advanced work in etymology is provided. Students are encouraged to do extensive free choice reading in addition to the assigned reading, and extra credit is given for reading classics.

6TH – 8TH GRADE PHYSICAL EDUCATION: The Physical Education Department at Vista Verde has developed a co-educational based instructional program designed to encourage lifetime involvement in physical activity called "Fit for Life". Students participate in a curriculum which includes a variety of individual and team sports. The curriculum may include: basketball, flag football, soccer, volleyball, softball, floor hockey, team handball, frisbee, dance, bocce ball, cooperative games, and cardiovascular and resistance training activities. Students also receive instruction in a variety of health and fitness related concepts.

SIXTH - EIGHTH GRADE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS OF CORE ELECTIVES

These classes 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. Please note that not all of these classes are offered every year. Check the current registration card for this year's exploratory choices.

YEAR-LONG ELECTIVES:

- **Concert Band:** (6-8) The Concert 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. Concepts and curriculum are aligned with the California Visual and Performing Arts Framework.

- **Symphonic Band:** (6-8) The Symphonic Band 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. Concepts and curriculum are aligned with the California Visual and Performing Arts Framework.
- **Concert Orchestra:** (6-8) The Concert Orchestra is a year-long course comprised of students who have beginning and intermediate 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.
- **Symphonic Orchestra:** (6-8) The Symphonic Orchestra is a year-long course comprised of advanced 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.
- **Leadership:** (6-8) **required class for all elected student government members.** This class is a full year experience where students learn about leadership, community service, and effective public speaking. Students in this class meet during an exploratory/elective period, before/after school (periodically), and during lunch periods to plan and organize student activities for the school year such as assemblies, spirit activities, and dances.
- **Spanish I:** is a full year course open to eighth grade students who have a B or better in Language Arts. This is a comprehensive basic course in which the student achieves facility in all aspects of listening, understanding, speaking, writing, and reading of the first-year lessons. Idiomatic expressions and verb conjugations are stressed in addition to other grammatical concepts. Hispanic history and civilization are introduced in conjunction with customs as a supplement to the text. This class will be offered within the regular elective period and will meet 4 times per week.

TRIMESTER ELECTIVES:

- **3-D Art/Model Building:** Students will explore 3-D Art through sculpture, model building, and alternate media. The process will include design, assembly, and presentation.
- **Adventures in Science:** This is a hands-on laboratory based science class that will be working in the areas of biology, chemistry, earth science and physics. Some of the activities include dissection, DNA extraction, copper plating, bacteria culturing, making volcanoes, 3D models of the earth, making crystals, leaf print tee shirts, and much, much more...
- **ASB (Asst. Student Body Officers):** Students in this class meet during an exploratory/elective period, before/after school (periodically), and during lunch periods to plan, organize student activities, and assist elected leaders for the school year in assemblies, spirit activities, and dances.
- **Ceramics:** This course will include basic hand building and slab rolling techniques. Multiple surface decoration and glazing techniques will be included. Advanced students will be given instruction in throwing on the wheel.

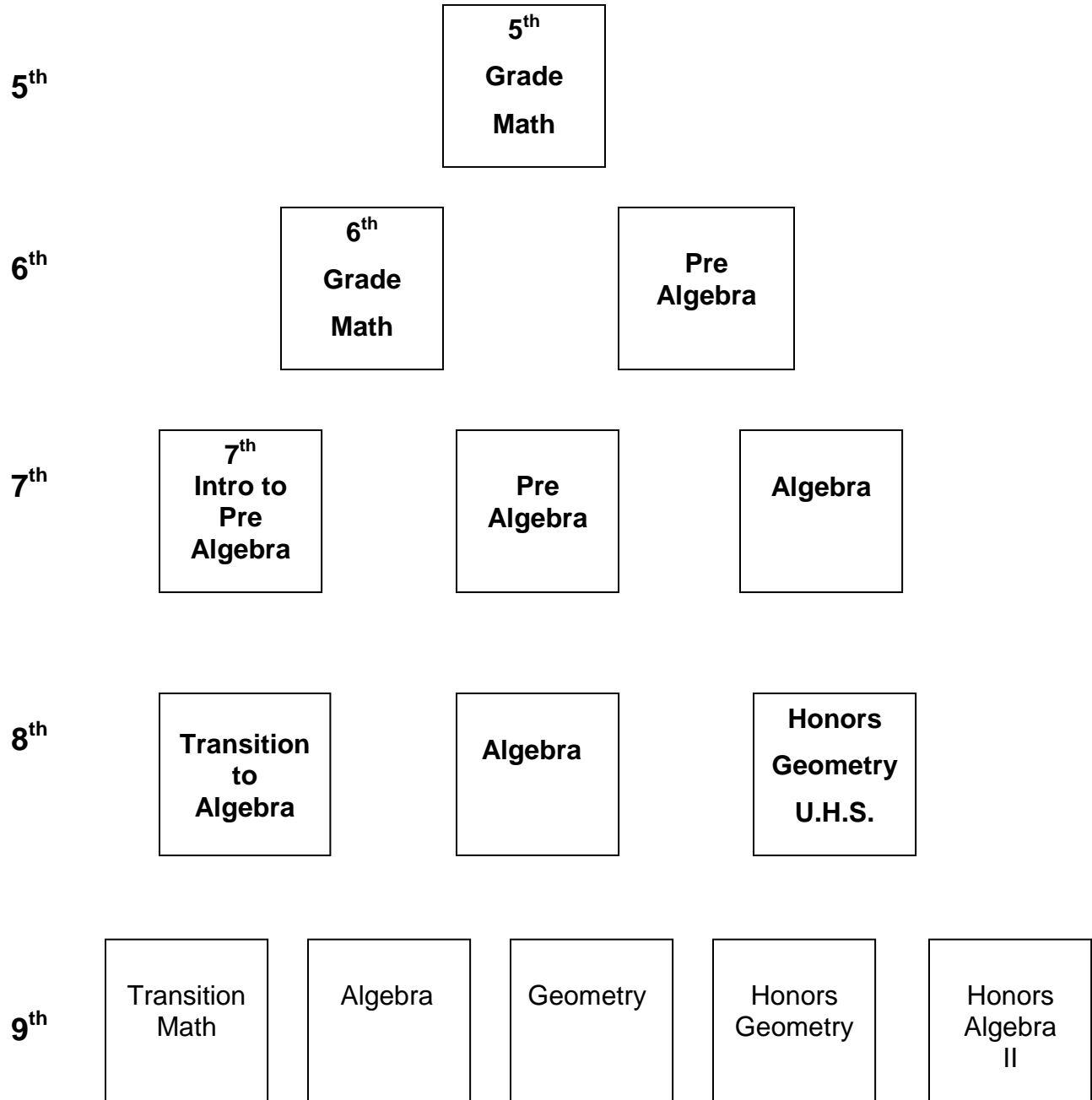
- **Culinary Arts:** Students will learn basic and advanced cooking skills as well as menu planning. Recipes from around the world will be highlighted. Students will choose a country to research, create a PowerPoint presentation, and teach a recipe indigenous to that country which the class will then cook.
- **Digital Arts:** Students will learn Microsoft Office applications and a variety of alternative programs. Students will also learn Internet research skills, web page building, and presentation skills. Teaching will include both a graphic and artistic approach to computer application. Software applications may include content specific applications such as mathematics, science, art, and social science. Final project is student created based on in class learning.
- **Directed Studies:** Students who are designated as a part of their Individual Education Program (IEP) attend a Directed Studies class to monitor and meet educational goals and objectives. Teacher recommendation.
- **Film Making**
In this class you will learn the basic techniques used in making a quality film. During the course you will be responsible for making at least two short films that incorporate a variety of audio and video techniques. The school will provide digital video cameras, laptop computers for editing and other equipment to make your work look professional. Materials fees may be charged.
- **Fine Arts:** In the fundamentals of art exploratory, students look at various artists and their contribution to the art world. Students will study some of the basic principal elements in the artist designs. Those elements include color, perspective, fundamental drawing concepts and compositional elements portraiture. By using a variety of materials students will apply the information to a series of art studio assignments.
- **Jewelry/Silver Chain Making/Bronze Clay Art:** If you are artistic and work well with your hands, you will love this class. You will make your own silver chains and create and form bronze clay designs for necklaces and bracelets. You will learn techniques for silver linked chains with a minimal amount of tools and equipment. Mrs. Stoldt will provide step-by-step guidance. Materials cost: A minimum of \$30.00 (for sterling silver). You will leave this class with a greater appreciation of art and take with you a medieval chain-link bracelet.
- **Journalism/Yearbook:** 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 elements of basic photographic arts.
- **Math Exploratory:** This class is by teacher recommendation only for students who are struggling in math. This class is designed to improve skills in basic math facts, to reinforce previously learned material from a higher standpoint, to clarify material being currently instructed, and to prepare students for future math concepts.
- **Middle School Chorus:** (6-8) The Middle School Chorus is a two trimester course that is for students that have previous singing experience, as well as for students new to singing. The course will focus on learning sight singing, rhythm, and listening skills, while developing healthy tone production and good stage presence. Students will be exposed to a wide variety of classical, musical theatre, and multi-cultural music. Concepts and curriculum are aligned with the California Visual and Performing Arts Framework.
- **Mixed Media:** Students explore the combined uses of drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, and assemblage to create unique art objects in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms through themed units. Media may include fibers, fabrics, plastics, papers, wood, found objects, ceramics, computer and photocopied generated materials, old pictures, and drawings.
- **Musical Theatre/Stage Production:** One trimester class where 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 for the Vista Verde community. Auditions are required. Costume fees apply. Some weekend rehearsals. Students must audition.

- **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.* For 7th & 8th Grade Only.
- **Quilt Making & Crafts:** Students will learn basic quilt making. Students will create a variety of projects. In this class, students will study cultural heritage and the connection of quilting from Americana to Hawaiian quilting.
- **Study Skills:** This course focuses on consistent student use of the planner. Assignments are verified daily. Planners are frequently checked. Teachers are consulted about assignments and due dates. General principles of organization and study habits are discussed and demonstrated. Students will discover their style of learning and come up with specific strategies to improve their effectiveness as learners. Students are given the opportunity to complete assignments in class and on the computer. *By teacher recommendation only.*
- **Taking Sides:** A Speaker’s Workshop. Learn to persuade others! In a supportive environment, students will improve oral skills through various speaking and debating opportunities.
- **Vocal Ensemble:** (6-8) The Vocal Ensemble is a two trimester class designed for the student with previous choral experience. Entrance into Vocal Ensemble is by audition only. The course will further develop sight singing, rhythm, and listening skills, while students continue to work towards mastering healthy tone production and stage presence. Students will be exposed to a wide variety of advanced classical, musical theatre, and multi-cultural music. Concepts and curriculum are aligned with the California Visual and Performing Arts Framework.

OTHER STUDENT PROGRAMS:

- **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 Mediation:** (6-8) is a full year experience for students who have been recommended by staff. Conflict Managers meet as a class within our advisement program. Students are trained in active communication, problem-solving and decision-making. Students implement conflict management strategies while working with elementary students during recess or lunch. They also assist in the coordination of a school-wide project.
- **Science Camp:** (6th) 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 eighth grade, and, if space allows, seventh grade are invited to attend a hands-on Science Camp at Catalina Island’s Camp Toyon. Participation is based on honor rolls for the year, as well as teacher recommendation.

Vista Verde Middle School
Mathematics Course Sequence



Placement into the proper math class is determined by meeting the course grade requirement and by passing:

- I.U.S.D. placement exam
- End of the year course exam
- Grade Level California State Standards exam

