



2024-2025  
ALTOONA MIDDLE SCHOOL

**8TH GRADE**

# **COURSE DESCRIPTION HANDBOOK**

ALL COURSES, INCLUDING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION COURSES, ARE AVAILABLE WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, ANCESTRY, CREED, PREGNANCY, MARITAL STATUS, PARENTAL STATUS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, SEX (INCLUDING TRANSGENDER STATUS, CHANGE OF SEX OR GENDER IDENTITY), OR PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, OR LEARNING DISABILITY, ANY OTHER CHARACTERISTIC PROTECTED BY LAW ("PROTECTED CLASSES") IN ANY OF ITS STUDENT PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AND EMPLOYMENT.

# Altoona Middle School

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Course Description Handbook

All courses, including Career and Technical Education courses, are available without discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, sex (including transgender status, change of sex or gender identity), or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability, any other characteristic protected by law ("protected classes") in any of its student programs, activities, and employment.

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### *Required Courses*

#### **American History – 2.5 Block Classes per week all year**

Eighth grade American History is a detailed exploration of our nation's past from the events precipitating the American Revolution until the end of Reconstruction. AMS Students will do so using a variety of primary and secondary sources to interpret the historical context, audience, purpose, point of view to draw conclusions. Further analysis will examine the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, our Bill of Rights and Supreme Court cases to identify and analyze democratic principles and ideals while examining and interpreting rights, privileges, and responsibilities in society. Additional activities will have our students initiate an inquiry, gathering evidence, evaluating sources, and developing claims using evidence to support reasoning concerning the Lewis and Clark expedition, Westward Movement and the Civil war. Throughout the year we will also be requiring students to use geographic tools to analyze the world around us as well as the economic interdependence of nations.

#### **English Language Arts – Every day all year**

The eighth grade ELA curriculum focuses on the art of reading and writing. Emphasis is placed on creating narrative, informative, argumentative, and creative writing pieces. Grammar and conventions lessons are taught throughout the year. Students write personal narratives, argumentative essays, textual analysis, reflective responses, informative biographies, researched speeches, and a variety of other pieces. Students will also practice reading strategies, critical thinking skills, citing text evidence, and vocabulary building. The overall goal of the class is to increase the literacy and writing ability of all students. Units include: The Outsider's Novel Unit, The Civil Rights Movement, Poetry, The Holocaust, Greek Mythology, Social Media, and creating written artifacts for a time capsule at the end of the year.

#### **Math – Every day all year**

Eighth grade math uses *Core Connections Course 3* and is designed to prepare students for a rigorous college preparatory algebra course. It uses a problem-based approach with concrete models. The course helps students develop multiple strategies to solve problems and to recognize the connections between concepts. Though more will be covered over the course of the year, the following essential standards/skills are what every student must master in order to be considered minimally proficient in this course: Problem Solving, Simplifying with Variables, Graphs and Equations, Multiple Representations, Systems of Equations, Transformations and Similarity, Slope and Association, Exponents and Functions, Angles and the Pythagorean Theorem, Surface Area and Volume. Study Teams are used in this class to learn or do work, while assessments focus on the individual.

## *Required Courses, cont.*

### **Physical Education – Every other day all year**

Students will be introduced to a variety of fitness based warm-ups, followed by the specific unit activities and skill work. The following units will be taught throughout the year if time permits; net games (volleyball, team handball, tchoukball, lacrosse, tennis, badminton) invasion games (basketball, floor hockey, flag football, soccer), fitness (fitness testing, weight room), outdoor recreation (snowshoeing, cross country skiing, disc golf, archery, golf), and team building. Students will be expected to work well with a team/partner setting as well as perform the necessary skills to be successful in the units. Students will be required to wear a PE shirt and will be given a PE locker. PE shirts are \$10 and can be purchased through the PE teachers on registration day.

### **PIE (Prevention/Intervention/Enrichment)**

This non-graded course provides students an opportunity for additional instruction in the areas of math and ELA helping meet their needs. This course also provides an array of enrichment and school-community activities. Students are selected for the intervention or enrichment options based on how their teachers feel they can best be supported. These courses change throughout the year. Elective courses are assigned randomly, giving students various experiences.

### **Science 8 – 2.5 Block Classes per week all year**

Science 8 will be a progression of the same topics covered in Science 6 and 7. Topics include: Waves and Wave Properties, Sound and the Electromagnetic Spectrum, The Sun-Earth-Moon System, Solar and Lunar Eclipses, the Seasons, Earth's Energy Resources, Humanity's Relationship with the Earth, Climate Change, Genetics and Heredity, and the Foundations of Evolution by Natural Selection. The emphasis of this course is on the scientific process through the study of the topics listed above. Students use models to make predictions and construct explanations. They also collect, analyze and interpret data, and report their findings through a formal scientific lab report using the CER (claim, evidence, and reasoning) format. This study will continue through the first semester of 9<sup>th</sup> grade with emphasis on the Earth's place in the universe.

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## *Elective Courses - Every other day all year*

### **Advanced Tech Ed ELECTIVE**

Welcome to an exclusive course specially tailored for 8th graders that already took FABulous FabLab or Manufacturing & Design. This is both an exciting and challenging adventure where you will use fab lab machines, electronics, 3D design, and graphic arts into one incredible project. Previous students wowed us with their creations, like crafting mag-lev tracks and trains. Will you and your classmates follow this track or blaze a new trail to showcase your awesomeness?

### **Band ELECTIVE**

How can students develop their skills to become a lifelong musician? 7th and 8th Grade Band is the ensemble that students become a part of after the year of 6th Grade Band. Our class is split into two sections, one with all woodwinds and one with brass and percussion. In this course, students will further develop their technical and musical skills on their instruments. A strong emphasis on fundamental skills and technical development will be taught throughout the year. The repertoire of music that students play will be more advanced than that of the beginning band. Some evening performances are required for this course. Students should practice outside of the school day to help develop their skills and promote the growth of our classroom ensemble. Please note that a purchase of a method book will be required.

### **Ceramics and Sculpture ELECTIVE**

Three-dimensional art occupies space defined through the dimensions of height, width and depth. This class will look at three-dimensional works of art, the methods an artist used to create the three-dimensional piece, and the history of the time that shaped the artist's work. Students will complete their own works of art using a variety of techniques and problem solving skills.

Techniques that may be used to create these works of art may include modeling, carving, assemblage and paper folding. Materials to complete the projects may include clay, plaster, wood, Paper Mache, plastics, Styrofoam, paper, and other materials depending on the three-dimensional art project. A field trip to the Minneapolis Art Institute culminates this class.

### **Chaos & Cash: Middle Schoolers' Guide to Business ELECTIVE**

This introductory course is designed to ignite students' entrepreneurial spirit and provide a foundational understanding of the world of business. Students will explore how these concepts can enhance future career goals through interactive activities and real world examples. Additionally, students will create a plan for a prospective business using aspects of marketing, finance, accounting, and management. Join us to discover the world of business and the many possibilities it offers!

### **Choir ELECTIVE**

We've all heard talented singers, but did you know much of this talent boils down to hard work and an understanding of how the voice works? Seventh and eighth grade choir is the next step in the journey as a choral musician. Building off of musical skills from 6th grade choir as well as the other music offerings, this choir learns and performs more advanced music. In choir, students will continue to learn the skills to maintain vocal health, master reading music, and understanding the many different elements of music. Small group and solo opportunities are available as well. All students are welcome, regardless of previous experience, though previous experience in choir is preferred. Two evening performances are required for this course.

### **Creative Entertainment in Pop Culture ELECTIVE**

Music is a vital part of American culture. In this class, students will look at the popular music that we listen to, including rock, pop, country, and rap. Students will learn how to mix their own music, as well as create a podcast. Students will also analyze music in movies and television, and create our own soundtracks, sound effects, and music videos. There are no required performances. A love of music is all that is required!

### **Digital Art ELECTIVE**

In today's world, media has become an essential part of our lives. It plays an incredible role in shaping the information and knowledge that is shared every day and everywhere. In this digital art class, students will continue to develop the skills of empowered learners by being innovative and creative designers, problem solvers and communicators. The learning and application of a variety of media production skills could include: stop motion, green screen, video editing, pixel art in correlation with video game design, infographics, digital graphics/marketing, social media and more.

### **Drawing and Painting ELECTIVE**

Two-dimensional art consists of a composition which occupies length and width such as paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs. Students will learn about the artists and cultures that contribute to our rich global artistic heritage and the two-dimensional works of art that they have created. Students will learn to use multiple media and techniques for creating two-dimensional works of art. Students will also learn to analyze and critique the works of art and the artists who made them to develop an appreciation and love for art.

Techniques students may use are printmaking, collage and many other exciting mediums. Materials used to complete the projects may include acrylic, tempera and watercolor paints, oil and chalk pastels, colored pencils, or pen and ink. A field trip to the Minneapolis Art Institute culminates this class.

## *Elective Courses, cont.*

### **FABulous FabLab ELECTIVE**

In FabLab you will utilize the software and machines in the lab and learn many facets of technology education. Students will study technology like electric motors, electromagnets, and gear ratios. Students will learn digital fabrication and create their own laser cut ornaments, vinyl cut stickers and heat transfer vinyl t-shirts. They will also study the engineering design process and use problem solving skills to complete challenges like building their own catapult. Last but not least, students will get to try their hand at woodworking. With a wide variety of projects, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

### **Manufacturing & Design ELECTIVE**

Get ready to dive into an exciting course where you'll explore both traditional manufacturing methods like cutting and drilling, and modern automated production machines such as laser engraving and CNC routers. Learn hands-on skills while also discovering how to use software and communicate your ideas effectively. From safety basics to problem-solving, this class will spark your creativity and teach you valuable technical know-how.

### **Mixed Media and Fun with Fibers ELECTIVE**

Come explore the world of mixed media and be introduced to a new way of breaking the boundaries between different art forms. This class is designed to expose the student to various processes, techniques and methods related to crafts. The student will not only explore art history as it relates to various crafts and cultures, but will also learn the processes used to create art. Students will utilize more than one medium in a single piece of art and may include paint, glitter, crayons, fabric and wool, magazine/book images/quotes, found objects, ink, watercolor, oil pastel, chalk pastel, colored pencils, etc. This art form is perfect for all those who are beginners as well as those who are not very good at drawing but still want to make something to fulfill their inner need of creativity.

### **MS Coding 1a ELECTIVE**

Do you find yourself wondering how your favorite apps, websites, and games were made? Maybe you want to try building your own. Well, now you can! In Middle School Coding 1a, you will get an introduction to the basics of computer science, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and Python. You'll leave the course with a portfolio of work you can show off.

**This class is an online self guided course provided through Wisconsin Virtual School. The teacher for this course is not present in the classroom, students will be supervised by an Altoona staff member during class period. Students who have a successful completion of MS Coding 1a may be allowed to move onto MS Coding 1b during the school year.** Students who take this course should feel comfortable:

- Working independently on classwork
- Typing for all assignments independently
- Reading through coursework independently
- Advocating for their learning and asking questions

### **Spanish 1B ELECTIVE**

Students who completed Spanish 1A in 7th grade will take Spanish 1B in 8th grade. Students who pass the course will then be placed in Spanish 2 as a freshman! Spanish 1B will build upon content from Spanish 1A. Students will continue to participate in reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities to improve their language proficiency. Students will complete projects, presentations, and in-class activities to practice Spanish and learn more about cultural traditions from around the world. Middle school students signing up for Spanish 1B must realize the curriculum is at the same rigorous pace as it is for high school students. It is a fun, yet fast-paced learning atmosphere. Get ready to learn new and exciting things as a student in Spanish 1B! ¡Olé!

# Altoona Middle School *Co-Curriculars*

We strongly advocate that fostering socially active and responsible students is intertwined with engaging in school-sponsored activities. Participation offers students the chance to acquire valuable skills, understand the significance of teamwork, sportsmanship, and fair play, and recognize that a positive attitude, dedication, and hard work are crucial for achieving success in life.

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## Altoona Middle School *Clubs & Activities*

**Art Club** is an activity where students gather to explore various artistic mediums and techniques. Through guided sessions and collaborative projects, members have the opportunity to express their creativity, develop their skills, and foster a deeper appreciation for the visual arts.

**Drama Club** is a student organization focused on exploring and celebrating the art of theater through rehearsals, performances, and workshops. The club provides a supportive environment for students to express themselves, build confidence, and foster a passion for the performing arts.

**Fitness Club** is a program designed to promote physical, mental, and emotional wellness among students through exercise and strength training. Participants engage in regular sessions focusing on fitness activities, weightlifting, and team-building exercises, fostering a supportive community and healthy lifestyle habits.

**Forensics** is an activity focused on developing students' public speaking and communication skills. Participants typically compete in speech events such as persuasive speaking and storytelling, gaining confidence and proficiency in presenting in front of an audience.

**Fuel Up to Play** Participation in Fuel Up to Play offers students various leadership and engagement opportunities. By managing activities like the Snack Shack, students cultivate essential entrepreneurial and teamwork abilities while advocating for healthy eating habits and physical fitness within their school community.

**In Training (Show Choir)** "In Training" is a program where students engage in singing and dancing to musical selections. Through dedicated rehearsals and performances, participants refine their vocal skills, enhance stage presence, and cultivate teamwork while delighting audiences with their musical expression.

**Mathcounts** is a competitive mathematics program designed for middle school students. Participants engage in individual and team problem-solving challenges, fostering critical thinking and mathematical skills in a supportive and collaborative environment.

**Racquet Club** The club provides an opportunity for students to improve their skills, stay physically active, and socialize with peers who share an interest in racquet sports such as badminton, pickleball and tennis.

**S.A.F.E. (Students Advocating For Excellence)** is a student-led organization dedicated to promoting positive values, behaviors, and academic excellence within the school community. Members work together to organize events, workshops, and campaigns that focus on issues such as mental health awareness, diversity and inclusion.

## *Clubs & Activities, cont.*

### **Student Council**

Consisting of student representatives who advocate for their peers within the school community, they strive to cultivate a positive school environment, encourage student participation, and spearhead projects benefiting the entire student body through their leadership roles.

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## **Altoona Middle School** *Athletics*

### *7th & 8th Grade Fall Athletics*

Opportunities include Coed Cross Country, Football, Boys Soccer, Girls Tennis, Girls Volleyball. The Fall season begins on September 3rd and concludes October 16th.

### *7th & 8th Grade Winter Athletics*

Winter athletic opportunities consist of Boys Basketball, which runs from October 21st to December 20th, as well as Girls Basketball and Coed Wrestling, beginning on January 2nd and concluding on February 28th.

### *7th & 8th Grade Spring Athletics*

In the spring, 7th & 8th grade students can participate in Girls Soccer, Boys Tennis, and Coed Track & Field. The season begins on March 31st and concludes on May 16th.

*For co-curricular information, go to:* [☰ Co-Curricular AMS Information](#)

## 8th Grade Middle School Elective Planning Guide

### Instructions:

1. **Read through each course description.**
2. **Rank your choices for electives. Rank “1” as your first choice, rank all electives.**
  - a. Incoming 8th grade students rank all electives. **DO NOT** include the electives taken in 7th grade.
  - b. Indicate YES or NO for Band. If yes, also choose your section.
  - c. If you took Spanish 1A in 7th grade you will be automatically enrolled in Spanish 1B.
  - d. Band and Choir can be taken as elective courses for both the 7th and 8th Grade years.
  - e. If two electives are chosen from the same field, such as Art or Technology, both of those electives may not be granted in order to give opportunity to other students.
  - f. Due to scheduling constraints, students will be expected to remain in their elective choices throughout the course time or year.
  - g. Students who do not turn in an elective ranking sheet will be assigned to electives and will not be able to choose different electives once scheduled.
3. **Obtain a parent signature on the Elective Planning Sheet.**

**8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS WILL HAVE PE  
AND 3 ADDITIONAL ELECTIVE CLASSES.**



# 8th Grade Middle School Elective Planning Guide

8th grade students will have physical education and 3 electives. Rank all electives.

✓ **Physical Education**

**I would like to take Band**       YES     NO

**If yes, select group below**

\_\_\_ **Woodwind/Percussion**

\_\_\_ **Brass**

**If you took Spanish 1A you will be automatically enrolled in Spanish 1B in 8th grade**

**Electives: (rank from 1 to 11)**

\_\_\_ **Advanced Tech Ed**

\_\_\_ **Ceramics and Sculpture**

\_\_\_ **Chaos & Cash: Middle Schoolers' Guide to Business & Tech**

\_\_\_ **Choir**

\_\_\_ **Creative Entertainment and Pop Culture**

\_\_\_ **Digital Arts (Media Production)**

\_\_\_ **Drawing and Painting**

\_\_\_ **Fabulous FabLab**

\_\_\_ **Manufacturing and Design**

\_\_\_ **Mixed Media and Fun with Fibers**

\_\_\_ **MS Coding**

Can I change my elective classes during the school year?

We cannot make changes during the year as this helps us keep balanced sections. While students may not have received all of the classes they were hoping for, all of our courses provide our students with amazing opportunities.

**STUDENT FIRST NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT LAST NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Signature** \_\_\_\_\_