



Altoona Middle School

8th Grade Course Description Handbook

2023-2024

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.

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. Students read and analyze mentor texts and samples of high level writing in order to incorporate those writing moves and techniques into their own pieces. 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 analyses, reflective responses, informative biographies, podcast and short film scripts, newspaper articles, and a variety of other genres of writing. Students will also practice reading strategies, critical thinking skills, citing text evidence, and vocabulary building will be the focus. A variety of novels, short stories, and magazines that are fiction, nonfiction, and poetry will be used to practice reading strategies and comprehension skills. The overall goal of the class is to increase the literacy and writing ability of all students. Some topics will be The Outsider’s Novel Unit, Holocaust Novel Unit, Greek Mythology Unit, Social Media Unit, Poetry Unit, The Civil Rights Movement Unit, and putting together 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.

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.

PIE (Prevention/Intervention/Enrichment)

This non-graded course provides students an opportunity for additional review and instruction in the areas of math and ELA helping them stay on track. This course also provides an array of enrichment and school-community activities, as well as continuing to reinforce and review what it means to have great character and be a good citizen.

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 Rock Cycle, Plate Tectonics, Earth's Energy Resources, Humanity's Relationship with the Earth, Climate Change, The Sun-Earth-Moon System, Solar and Lunar Eclipses, and the Seasons. 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 format (claim, evidence, and reasoning). This study will continue through the first semester of 9th grade with emphasis on the Earth's place in the universe.

ELECTIVE COURSES – Every other day all year

Advanced Tech Ed ELECTIVE

This is a relatively new class that focuses on taking the design process, the new technology in the FabLab, and going more in depth to create a more personalized and community service approach to projects. Students will also receive hands-on experiences and introduction to many Technology Education classes offered at the high school by doing short units in some classes offered at the high school. We will design and create personalized phone holders, vinyl designs, various lasered projects, epoxy coaster, wood projects, program robots, and much more. We will also have engineering challenges. Students will use the laser engraver, vinyl machine, sublimation machine, high school woodshop, and various other machines to advance their skills and knowledge of today's technology.

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.

Choir ELECTIVE *Required if participating in Show Choir

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.

FABulous FabLab ELECTIVE

Utilize the awesome software and machines in the FabLab, along with your creativity and hard work, to create unique projects. We will be learning to create projects in a solid modeling program to 3D print or to create sliced cardboard creations using the laser engraver. We will create stickers and vinyl heat press t-shirts as well as posters. We will also use machines and equipment to design and create a LED night light.

Game on! (MS Game Design 1) ELECTIVE

We all love to play video games – but have you ever wanted to build your own? If you are interested in a career in technology but also want a creative outlet, This class might be for you. Learn how to build a game from the ground up in Middle School Game Design 1, an interactive and hands-on course that will teach you all the ins and outs of making your own game. You will learn the importance of game structure and discover what makes a game fun, challenging, and interesting to players just like you. You will also have the opportunity to explore the design and creative process involved in game creation, learn block-based programs, and experiment with character and story development. As a bonus, you will leave the course with a digital portfolio of everything you created in class. ***This is an online course, taking place here at school, where students work independently to achieve course goals. Taking this course requires students to work well independently at work completion while checking in with their online teacher.***

Manufacturing & Design ELECTIVE

Create hands-on projects using the awesome machines in the FabLab as well as the traditional shop machines such as band saws and drill presses. We will design and create CO2 cars, model rockets, 3D models, triangle golf tee game, Superclip, and learn about inventions.

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.

Music Exploration ELECTIVE

Music Exploration is a new elective music class where students will have the opportunity to learn more about music and how it interacts with the world around them. In Music Exploration, students will learn about music history, music theory, singing, dancing, world music drumming, piano, guitar, show choir, musicals, and other relevant music topics.

Spanish I B ELECTIVE

Students who completed Spanish I A in 7th grade will take Spanish I B in 8th grade. Students who pass the course will then be placed in Spanish II as a freshman! Spanish I B will build upon content from Spanish I A. 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 I B 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 I B! ¡Olé!

Altoona Middle School

Extra/Co-Curricular Activities

The School District of Altoona recognizes the importance of extra/co-curricular activities as an integral part of the total educational experience. We believe the development of socially active and responsible students goes hand-in-hand with participation in school sponsored activities. Involvement will provide each student with the opportunity to learn useful skills; the awareness of the importance of teamwork, sportsmanship, fair play and the realization that a positive attitude, dedication and hard work are essential for success in life. It also challenges students by providing opportunities to attain the skills and knowledge to be mentally and physically active as part of a healthy lifestyle. In order to receive these benefits, each student must meet certain expectations for the privilege of participating in athletics and activities at Altoona Middle School.



Extra/Co-Curricular Offerings

7th Grade Students

Fall Athletics: Cross Country, Girls Tennis, Football, Volleyball, Boys Soccer

Winter Athletics: Wrestling, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball

Spring Athletics: Boys Tennis, Track & Field, Girls Soccer

Clubs/Activities: Art Club, Best Buddies, Diversity Club, Drama Club (School Play), Fitness Club, Fuel Up to Play 60, Mathcounts, Minecraft Club, Railroader Club, In-Training Show Choir, Student Council, Yearbook

6th Grade Students

Fall Athletics: Cross Country, Girls Tennis

Winter Athletics: Wrestling

Spring Athletics: Boys Tennis

Clubs/Activities: Art Club, Best Buddies, Diversity Club, Drama Club (School Play), Fitness Club, Fuel Up to Play 60, Mathcounts, Minecraft Club, Railroader Club, In-Training Show Choir, Student Council, Yearbook

8th Grade Students

Fall Athletics: Cross Country, Girls Tennis, Football, Volleyball, Boys Soccer

Winter Athletics: Wrestling, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball

Spring Athletics: Boys Tennis, Track & Field, Girls Soccer

Clubs/Activities: Art Club, Best Buddies, Diversity Club, Drama Club (School Play), Fitness Club, Fuel Up to Play 60, Mathcounts, Minecraft Club, Railroader Club, In-Training Show Choir, Student Council, Yearbook, 8th Grade Mentors

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. Choir must be an elective chosen in order to be in Show Choir.
 - f. 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.
 - g. Due to scheduling constraints, students will be expected to remain in their elective choices throughout the course time or year.
 - h. 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.**

8TH 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 enrolled in Spanish 1B in 8th grade

Electives: (rank from 1 to 11)

_____ Advanced Tech Ed

_____ Ceramics and Sculpture

_____ Choir **Required for Show Choir participants**

_____ Creative Entertainment and Pop Culture

_____ Digital Arts (Media Production)

_____ Drawing and Painting

_____ Fabulous FabLab

_____ Game On! (MS Game Design 1)

_____ Manufacturing and Design

_____ Mixed Media and Fun with Fibers

_____ Music Exploration

STUDENT NAME ,

***STUDENT SIGNATURE** _____

***PARENT SIGNATURE** _____

