2020-2021
middle school
Course Catalog

Distinctive Features

Course Descriptions

English
Social Studies
Science
Mathematics
Visual Arts
Performing Arts
World Languages
Physical Education
Athletics

Commitment to Equity, Inclusion and Diversity

Current Statistics: Students and Faculty

Middle School Faculty

Middle School Daily Schedule
Humanities Program

The humanities program unites social studies and English instruction and provides a major focus for the rigorous Athenian Middle School curriculum. The three-year humanities sequence employs grade level themes: Pacific Rim in sixth grade, Foundations in Western Civilization in seventh grade, and American Studies in eighth grade. The humanities program develops essential skills: effective oral and written communication, critical analysis, and reflective thinking. Students learn how to evaluate sources for relevance, validity, and reliability, read critically, develop logical and effective arguments, and write clearly and convincingly. They also learn how to listen respectfully and work together cooperatively. Students come to appreciate diverse cultures and understand how they contribute to our current society. Ultimately, the humanities program fosters curiosity to ask searching questions and confidence to carry projects to fruition and fulfillment. Students are prepared for success in the Upper School, college, and later life.

Friday Focus Days

Friday Focus Days feature interdisciplinary and experiential learning that draws together the strands of the curriculum for enrichment, extension of activities, or culminating events that conclude units of study. The flexible scheduling on these days also allows us to take advantage of the educationally enriching resources of the Bay Area with periodic field trips. These thematic, hands-on, daylong programs bring to life concepts and skills from the curriculum. Examples of Focus Days include Greek Panathenaea, Scratch Programming, Pool Volume Day, Medieval Day, Migration Day, Newtonian Olympics, Mock Trial, and Shogun Day.

Advisory Program

Each Middle School student is assigned a faculty advisor who serves as that student’s mentor and contact person. Small advisory groups of approximately ten students meet with their advisor every week to discuss important issues and socialize informally. The advisor is a resource for personal or academic issues and provides support and guidance for students. The advisor is also the primary point person at school for parents.

Counseling Program

The Middle School has a part-time counselor to help students with their personal, academic, and social issues. The counselor is available to advise and support students, teachers, administration, and parents regarding student issues and to help students navigate the overall school climate. The counselor also teaches Life Skills to every sixth grader. This class focuses on peer relations, conflict resolution, and study skills.

Elective Courses

Three times per year, students choose from a variety of electives offered in subjects including the arts, technology, sports and leadership. Other popular choices have included: yearbook, newspaper jewelry making, improv, and urban farming. Electives vary from year-to-year.

Community Service

The community service program is designed to enrich the social consciousness of our Middle School students. Middle School students are required to participate in several community service projects each year. On-campus projects include: serving in student government, creating the yearbook, and maintaining the Middle School campus. Off-campus class projects may include cleaning the Hayward shoreline, working at the Alameda County Food Bank, and volunteering at an assisted-living facility. Eighth graders are responsible for developing and executing individual projects during the school year, which can also be arranged through organizations in the student’s community.

Robotics/Airplane

During the elective period, the Middle School may offer courses such as engineering or maker’s design in the Carter Innovation Studio. Students also have the opportunity to participate in building Athenian’s third airplane during electives or after school. Students can also participate in our after-school robotics program.

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Round Square International Association of Schools

Athenian is a founding member of a consortium of over sixty schools on six continents. The Middle School participates in Young Round Square conferences, exchanges, service projects and annual conferences around the world. Athenian students develop a profoundly global perspective through our Round Square activities. The Round Square Pillars also help define Athenian’s philosophy of education:

- Outdoor Adventure
- Education for Democracy
- International and Multicultural Understanding
- Community Service
- Environmental Awareness
- Leadership

Advantages of a School for Grades 6-12

The Middle School campus, schedule, and curriculum are distinct from the Upper School. Nonetheless, Athenian Middle School students can utilize the excellent facilities and resources developed for an outstanding college preparatory school, grades 6-12. These include a library, laboratories, maker’s studio, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, music and multipurpose building, a dining hall and lunch program. Additionally, some Middle School students may be placed in Upper School mathematics or world language courses.
Course Descriptions

English

The English curriculum draws many of its themes from the three-year humanities sequence: Civilization and the Pacific Rim, Western Civilization, and American Studies. The English program emphasizes important writing, reading, oral language, research, and affective skills. Students read and perform plays in all grades.

Sixth Grade

Identity, community, and resilience are central themes of sixth grade English. Reading and writing genres include autobiography, mythology, historical fiction, science fiction, and realistic fiction.

**Texts may include:** The Giver, The Outsiders, The Hobbit, House on Mango Street, I am Malala and Raymond’s Run.

**Writing skills:** parts of speech and grammatical usage, sentence structure, complex sentences, sentence variety, topic sentences, coherent paragraphs, essays, poetry, and composition for special purposes (i.e. short stories, position papers, and descriptive writing).

**Reading skills:** recognizing point of view, main idea, characterization, plot elements, imagery conflict, and drawing conclusions.

**Oral language skills:** presentations of learning.

**Research skills:** making inferences from information, fact vs. opinion, using resources and references, and comparing sources.

**Affective skills:** responsible work habits and study skills; understanding differences; self-confidence; enjoyment of learning, reading and writing; accepting group and individual responsibility; personal honesty and integrity; and curiosity and openness to new approaches.

Seventh Grade

Literary themes in this Foundation in Western Civilization year include inherited cultural values and ideals, the persistence and transformation of stories, the roles of religion and government, migration and war, language, and cultural change.

**Texts may include:** The Trojan War, the plays of Aeschylus, and A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

**Writing skills:** the writing process, personification, metaphor and simile, fluid multi-paragraph essays, complex and varied sentence structure, and persuasive writing.

**Reading skills:** voice and point of view, analysis of literary elements, and increased vocabulary.

**Oral language skills:** confident performance in acting, discussion, participation, the Socratic method, and formal presentations.

**Research skills:** expansion of research topics, reconciling multiple resources, attributing resources, word-processing, and selecting and using quality online resources.

**Affective skills:** responsible work habits and study skills, respect for differences of opinion, constructive criticism, recognition of bias and fallacious argument, empathetic response to stories and points of view.

Eighth Grade

Literary themes in this American Studies year include immigration, a just society, empathy development, civil rights, urban life, love, war, and identity development.

**Texts may include:** Grampa was a Cowboy and an Indian, To Kill a Mockingbird, and Romeo and Juliet.

**Writing skills:** proficient writing style, organization, figurative language, varied writing structures, writing forms, detailed analytical essay, poetry, autobiographical essay, understanding of audience, and editing proficiency.

**Reading skills:** text analysis and evaluation, story elements, author’s purpose, audience, personal and social issues, textual clues and outcomes, allegory, social relevance, and continued acquisition of new vocabulary.

**Oral language skills:** ability to recognize and argue both sides of an issue for speech presentation, and presentation and performance skills.

**Research skills:** thesis statement, persuasive devices, point of view, conclusions from multiple resources, and multimedia presentation using computer technology.

**Affective skills:** expanded interests in reading, clear voice in writing, internalization of academic honesty and personal integrity, time management and study skills, sensitivity to the needs of others, and contributing to the good of the community.
Social Studies

The social studies curriculum draws many of its themes from the three-year humanities sequence: Pacific Rim, Western Civilization, and American Studies. The social studies program emphasizes important critical thinking, communication, research, geographic, and affective skills. The main goals of the social studies program overall are to help students to build a common base of essential knowledge, strengthen academic skills, enhance appreciation of the human experience, and foster critical thinking. Ideally, we want our students to develop improved abilities to identify and assess the ‘how and why’ of our world and the human condition. The social studies curriculum is designed with continuity from 6th through 8th grade as well as a 6-12 humanities arc in mind. Our approach covers a different given region broadly each year, exploring sequences of key developments, but with a thematic emphasis upon a shared set of analytical approaches and core concepts that are employed at each level with increasing complexity and sophistication.

Sixth Grade

The lands and peoples of South Asia, East Asia, and Oceania are the main foci of the year after introduction to the main analytical skills used to evaluate the features of a society. Topics covered include the key developments of prehistory that cover appearance, expansion, and increasing complexity of human societies; technology and innovation; religions and philosophies; beliefs and government; social structures and systems of rule; aesthetics and arts.

**Texts(s) may include:** The Encyclopedia of World Religions; China: Land of Dragons and Emperors; Life in the Ancient Indus River Valley; Life in the Ancient Japan; class handouts.

**Critical Thinking Skills:** Use of categorical modes of inquiry (geographical, historical sequence, cultural, economic, political) that correspond with basic questions (where, when, who, what, how) about a given society and that over time become a set of analytical tools to be employed systematically throughout the social studies sequence for enhancing comparative understanding of different societies.

Evaluation of evidence and its meaning, including concepts such as fact/opinion, specific/general, trivial/intrinsic, objective/subjective; identification and understanding of fairly universal concepts of some abstraction and complexity (e.g., identity, power, beauty, exchange, resources, diffusion, values, beliefs, innovation, etc.) using multiple modes of learning; drawing conclusions from information. Understanding of time spans, relationships of events and phenomena chronologically, causes and effects.

**Social and Communicative skills:** Acquisition of information from a variety of sources; evaluation of evidence and identification of significance; proper use and citation of sources; organization of information (use of notes, tables, outlines, images); construction and presentation of original insight incorporating learned data. Simulations and role-playing; sharing and discussion of topics, collaboration and cooperation on group projects; oral and visual presentations; debate and critical evaluation of material.

**Map and Geographic skills:** Map literacy (reading different types, understanding features, knowledge of specific places); understanding of the impact of terrain, resources, and climate upon development.

**Affective skills:** Active listening; awareness of the universal and shared features of diverse societies, as well as valuing of their distinctions and uniqueness; exploration of multiple perspectives; intellectual curiosity.

Seventh Grade

Social studies themes in Foundation in Western Civilization include mythology and cultures of ancient and classical Greece and Rome, medieval life and monotheistic traditions, the enlightenment and the exploration of the origins of modern ideas of a democratic and just society.

**Text(s) may include:** Teacher provided eBooks and various texts and in-class materials; The Encyclopedia of World Religions.

**Critical thinking skills:** intelligent questioning, independent and guided discovery, cause and effect relationships, premise vs. conclusion, and repeated or cyclical events in history.

**Social and communicative skills:** points of view and context for actions, statements, and records; point of view vs. cultural stereotyping; bias and propaganda; interviewing techniques; public speaking and group skills.

**Map and geographic skills:** geographical recognition and understanding, scale, topical focus, and use of historical mapsto trace change.

**Research skills:** note taking, research report writing process, web resource analysis, and comparing information from several sources.

**Affective skills:** curiosity and inquisitiveness; intelligent skepticism; taking responsibility for self and others; influencing social outcomes positively; intellectual integrity; fairness and justice; diversity of thought, background, and choice.
Eighth Grade

Social Studies themes in the American Studies year focus on conflict and change in American society and political structures. Units of study include: the American Revolution, the Constitution, migration, immigration, Native American cultures, international involvement, slavery, reconstruction, and the Civil Rights movement.

**Text(s):** Teacher will provide required eBook information.

**Critical thinking skills:** drawing conclusions from evidence and resources; primary and secondary sources; ethics; and logic in argumentation.

**Social and communicative skills:** point of view and context for meaning; bias and propaganda; debating, and conflicts between individual and societal goals.

**Map and geographic skills:** reading and analyzing historical maps, atlases, and graphs.

**Research skills:** drawing conclusions from different resources; evaluating sources and using online information sources proficiently and critically.

**Affective skills:** investigating controversial issues with reason and objectivity; and accepting and delegating responsibility to support leadership.

Science

The Middle School science program focuses on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the study of Astronomy, Earth Science, Life Science, and Physical Science. Project-based learning, laboratory experiments, field trips, and classroom discussions provide rich content. Students not only master factual information, but also learn to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding as they encounter new questions and ideas.

Sixth Grade: Astronomy & Earth Science

This course develops curiosity about the natural world and a working appreciation of scientific problem-solving methods. The course encourages students to educate themselves, articulate what they have learned, and succeed in accomplishing their objectives. Themes for the course are often coordinated with our humanities curriculum and current events. The course will begin with an overview of the functions of the human brain. We will emphasize the plasticity of the brain and discuss ways in which we can stretch and strengthen our brain to do new and different things. We will discuss Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences and become more aware of our own ideal learning strategies. The Earth Science portion of the course will include study of geologic timelines, layers of the Earth and landform processes including plate tectonics, earthquakes and volcanoes.

During the second semester we will expand our study from Earth to the surrounding solar system. We will investigate why we experience day, night and seasons on Earth. We will learn about planets, constellations and space exploration. In the spring we will also spend a few weeks recognizing the importance of Earth Day and investigating ways we can make positive choices to reduce our ecological footprints.

Observation and critical thinking skills are sharpened with hands-on activities, outdoor labs and field trips to nearby attractions such as Sunol, Tilden, Chabot, and Mt. Diablo.

**Text(s) may include** (in class sets): Science Explorer: Inside Earth, Earth's Changing Surface and Astronomy.

Seventh Grade: Life Science

In this course, students come to understand the environment as a dynamic system and recognize that they have important potential to affect change in it. Students also learn about their own bodies, their growth and development, and about their options for making responsible choices. Particular attention is given to the effect of humans on the environment. Students create their own microhabitats and record changes as they occur. The microscope is used for analysis of plants, cells, and water samples. This course also discusses genetics. Heredity and genetics are personalized by student debates on the nature/nurture controversy. Human evolution is discussed in examining the paleontological record. The play, Inherit the Wind, dramatizes the delicate balance between scientific investigations and cultural values. The course also addresses health, sex education, family life, adolescent growth, sexuality, birth control, and the effects of drugs on the body. For a week, each child plays surrogate parent to an egg, keeping a journal to gain insight into the joys and trials of parenthood.

**Text(s):** Inherit the Wind; Science Explorer-Cells and Heredity

Eighth Grade: Physical Science

In this class, students prepare for Upper School science courses by developing quantitative and analytical approaches to problem solving in chemistry and physics. Organizational study skills for science are mastered. Students learn about scientific method, measurement, including distance, area, time, and temperature. Students measure and calculate the characteristic features of the Athenian environment including the volume of the swimming pool! Chemistry content includes the properties of matter and atomic structure, the periodic table, and chemical reactions. Students’ research papers examine aspects of environmental pollution from scientific and social perspectives. Physics content includes force, motion, work, and energy. The term culminates with Newtonian Olympics, in which students design and build projects illustrating Newton’s Laws of Motion.

**Text(s):** Pearson’s Interactive Science – Physical Science eText
Mathematics

Students are placed in mathematics based on mastery, rather than age.

The Mathematics Department evaluates students at the beginning and end of each school year to ensure that students are placed in a course that will optimize learning. Sixth grade students typically take either Math 6 or Pre-Algebra. Seventh graders are typically placed in Pre-Algebra or Algebra. Eighth graders typically take Algebra, Advanced Algebra, or Geometry. Occasionally, students are placed in Algebra 2 Honors in our Upper School.

The Middle School mathematics curriculum teaches a coherent approach to mathematical thinking which also includes a diversity of approaches to problem-solving. Students are encouraged to develop confidence in their own problem-solving approaches and to take joy in new approaches as they acquire more powerful analytical strategies. Students often work in small groups to build group management skills, communication skills and confidence in mathematical abilities. The understanding and ability to develop and apply complex mathematical concepts is our goal for every student. General program goals include: becoming skilled in estimation and computation using whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages; utilizing mental arithmetic and estimation in a variety of situations; gaining confidence in thinking mathematically, expressing quantitative statements mathematically, and solving quantitative questions; using mathematical statements and graphs to describe application questions; using Algebraic concepts to solve a variety of equations and inequalities; and learning to express equations and functions graphically.

### Math 6

In this course students build their self-confidence in solving mathematical problems. They master operations involving whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. Students find and use measures of centrality including mean, mode, and median. Varied graphing techniques allow students to depict statistical evidence. Beginning plane geometry is also introduced. Mastery of concepts and confidence in oneself as a mathematical thinker are the goals.

**Text(s):** Math 7/6

### Pre-Algebra

The focus of this class is the introduction of algebraic concepts. Topics include: working with real numbers, simplifying algebraic expressions, solving equations, polynomials, factoring, ratios, proportions and percent, graphing linear equations using various methods, functions, systems of linear equations, inequalities, rational and irrational numbers, and quadratic functions. Students develop mastery of the topics and the ability to think abstractly about mathematical concepts.

**Text(s):** Math 8/7 with Pre-Algebra

### Algebra

This full-year course is an in-depth study in the understanding and application of basic algebraic concepts. Topics are learned using discovery-based lessons designed specifically for our students. They construct their ideas while working actively in small groups. Specific skills include: understanding the field axioms for real numbers; simplifying basic expressions; solving linear equations and inequalities; factoring algebraic expressions; solving quadratic equations; simplifying polynomials; factoring polynomials; simplifying rational expressions; solving rational equations; simplifying radical expressions; solving radical equations; understanding linear equations and their graphs; solving systems of equations and inequalities.

**Text(s):** Teacher will provide material.

### Advanced Algebra

In this course, students master the concepts of Algebra I which include: solving complex equations, exponents, polynomials, linear equations, slope-intercept graphing, uniform motion problems, the Pythagorean Theorem, complex linear equations, operations with polynomials, functions and quadratics. Throughout the year, students pursue special projects that are extensions and applications of the skills that they have learned in class.

**Text(s):** Algebra I; Elementary Algebra: Concepts and Applications

### Geometry

Geometry may be taken by advanced students receiving a teacher recommendation and the required grades in Algebra. This full-year course is a thorough study of the main concepts of Euclidean Geometry. Topics are learned using discovery-based, inductive reasoning while working actively in small groups. Students arrive at conjectures, test them, and then use deductive reasoning to be sure their conjectures are accurate. Topics include classic and patty paper constructions, properties of triangles, properties of polygons, properties of circles, a study of area and volume, congruence, similarity, the Pythagorean Theorem and a brief introduction to trigonometry. Algebra is reviewed periodically throughout the term to help students prepare for Algebra II.

**Text(s):** Discovering Geometry: An Investigative Approach
Visual Art

All students take visual arts classes in sixth grade and can choose to take either visual or performing arts in seventh and eighth grade. The visual arts curriculum is integrated with the curriculum in each of the other departments. In addition, the art curriculum is aligned with the humanities program themes for each grade: Pacific Rim, Foundation in Western Civilization, and American Studies. The arts program is accessible to all levels of interest and skill. It prepares students for advanced courses in the Upper School, providing important aesthetic and technical information. The arts program develops confidence and a feeling of competence in creative arts. The activities in the visual arts curriculum explore the fundamentals that shape artistic expression: line, color, texture, shape, and volume.

Students employ a wide variety of media and techniques. Projects involve drawing, painting, sculpture, clay, and conceptual creations. Each student develops a portfolio that includes life drawing exercises, story description and illustration, technical or scientific observation, and examples of each element of design as it is presented. Clay and sculpture projects are taken home after each project. In addition, art is incorporated into all areas of Middle School life including publications, special events, and field trips.

Performing Arts

All sixth-grade students entering The Athenian School are exposed to basic concepts in choral and instrumental music. The music class meets three times per week for one trimester. Students each receive training on an orchestral instrument of their choice (instruments to be provided by the School). Students also learn basic music theory and receive vocal training. For seventh and eighth grades, students may participate in Band or Chorus as academic subjects. These classes culminate in fall and spring concerts. All Athenian Middle School students take part in music and performing arts as an integral part of our interdisciplinary Focus Days for all grade levels.

World Languages

The Middle School world language program focuses on developing communicative ability in Spanish, French or Chinese, incorporating the elements of speaking, reading, writing, listening, and culture. Acquiring verbal fluency and a working vocabulary receive high priority. An emphasis on grammar clarifies communicative intent. Activities engage students’ interest and encourage lively discussion. Accelerated students may be placed in advanced Middle School or Upper School world language classes.

Spanish

Level 1A

In this introduction to Spanish, students begin to acquire language through actions. After building a basic working vocabulary of 250 words, grammar and syntax are introduced in the context of stories and thematic units covered in the textbook. Level-appropriate stories and novels provide sources for exploration of Latin culture. Writing is emphasized, and students are given weekly assignments. By the end of the year, students are able to write with a high degree of accuracy and interest.

Text(s): Realidades Level 1

Level 1B

This course expands on the principles learned in Spanish 1A. Students continue to acquire vocabulary and language structures through working with stories, lessons from the textbook, and weekly reading and writing assignments. A more formal study of grammar is introduced so that students gain a mastery of the present tense before moving on to more complex grammatical structures. Through stories and short novels students learn about culture and nuances of the language. Great emphasis is placed on language acquisition throughout level 1B.

Text(s): Realidades Level 1; Casi Se Muere

Level 1C

Weekly reading and writing continue, and oral production is emphasized to a great degree. Formal grammar and verb conjugation are practiced in preparation for level 2. The cultural focus is on Spanish in our communities.

Text(s): Realidades Level 1

Upper School Spanish Courses

Upper School courses may be taken by students who have advanced beyond level 1C (as determined by the Athenian Language Department).
French

Level 1A
In this introduction to French, students develop skills across the four competencies of language acquisition: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Our curriculum emphasizes practical communication, creative expression, and cultural awareness. Students engage in a variety of learning activities in French, including games, stories, creative writing assignments, and oral presentations. By the end of the year, students are able to read a short novel in French and write a coherent brief composition. Homework is assigned daily unless stated otherwise.

Text(s): Bien dit! Level 1

Level 1B
This course expands upon the principles learned in French 1A. Students continue to acquire vocabulary and language structures with innovative activities. Weekly assignments across the four competencies of language (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) enable students to develop increased fluency. As in the first year, the curriculum emphasizes level appropriate practical communication, creative expression, and cultural awareness. In the spring, students read a novel in French and are able to write a composition of 200 words with a high degree of accuracy. We will reinforce present tense, introduce near future and recent past.

Text(s): Bien dit! Level 1

Mandarin Chinese

Level 1A
Level 1A is designed for students without any Chinese language background. In this introduction to Mandarin Chinese, students begin to develop skills across the four competencies of language acquisition: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. This course covers pronunciation, vocabulary, dialogue, grammar, reading comprehension, and the writing of Chinese characters. We will introduce Chinese Pinyin phonetics and intonation. Students will learn about 150 Chinese characters and radicals and will be able to write about themselves using learned phrases and memorized expressions. Chinese culture, holidays, lifestyles and customs will be introduced with supplementary materials and multimedia.

Text(s): Discovering Chinese iPad App

Level 1B
Level 1B is a continuation of Mandarin 1A. Students will learn listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through activities that are based on pedagogically proven methods of foreign language instruction. The course combines work from online iPad lessons along with supplemental sources. Students will develop the ability to use complex sentence structures and increased vocabulary appropriate to the third year. In addition to this, students explore the different historical aspects of the Chinese speaking world through films and cultural projects. Students will use the Pinyin system to type out skits, notes, and stories. Students should be able to write a 200-word original story.

Text(s): Discovering Chinese iPad App

Level 1C
In the third year, oral and written fluency is emphasized to a greater degree. The past tense is introduced, and students are encouraged to communicate using more idiomatic expressions. Weekly assignments across the four competencies of language continue using French stories, novels, songs, and the occasional film. The culminating project for the year is the autobiography in French. Students write a 500-word composition in French detailing their life, as well as their hopes for the future. Language placement evaluations in the spring determine student advancement to Upper School French courses.

Text(s): Bien dit! Level 1

Upper School French Courses
Upper School courses may be taken by students who have advanced beyond level 1C (as determined by the Athenian Language Department).

Level 1C
This course continues to expand and refine Mandarin vocabulary and grammar. The goal of each lesson is to provide all students with opportunities to practice the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The course encourages students to improve their listening and conversational skills by participating in oral discussion and skits. This is done through the use of stories, a play, songs, proverbs, films and oral presentations. Emphasis will be placed on improving reading comprehension, writing skills from short stories and skits. Students write a 300-word autobiography in Chinese detailing their favorite memories at Athenian and with their family. Language placement evaluations in the spring determine student advancement to Upper School Chinese courses.

Text(s): Discovering Chinese iPad App

Upper School Mandarin Chinese Courses
Upper School courses may be taken by students who have advanced beyond level 1C (as determined by the Athenian Language Department).
The Athenian School Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

The Athenian School recognizes that true multiculturalism and diversity need the spirit of equity and inclusion in order to foster a strong community of learners. Athenian emphasizes skill building around empathy, perspective recognition, analysis and inquiry, self-awareness, and the acknowledgment of environmental privileges. Learning and life are enhanced when we are able to step into the intellectual space of others with respect and understanding. Our goal is that our students, faculty and staff build their capacity to increase their cultural wisdom and create community.

Physical Education

Every Middle School student takes physical education classes at least three times per week. Consistent with our interdisciplinary philosophy, physical education is also integrated with other subjects throughout the year and Focus Days often include a sports component. The long-term goal of the program is to encourage every student to enjoy athletics and physical fitness as a source of well-being and pleasure throughout life. Specifically, the physical education curriculum helps students develop a sense of self-esteem and self-confidence; increases physical flexibility, strength, and endurance; improves timing and coordination; and increases skills in particular sports through instruction of rules and strategies. The curriculum interweaves health lessons, including nutrition, anatomy, and body functions, such as the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Cardiovascular fitness is developed through periodic runs in which students keep track of their times and pulse rates. After a warm-up and stretch period, most classes focus on a particular sport. Additional sports elective courses are offered for students who wish to spend more time in physical education.

Athletics

The Athenian Middle School competes with other schools in interscholastic athletics in a number of sports, including: Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and flag football. Practices take place during the school day’s elective period. Games occur after school with transportation to and from events provided by Athenian buses or vans. Athenian's transportation department is very busy taking care of needs of the whole school, and there are times when we may need to ask for parent help as chaperones or drivers.

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Current Statistics: Students and Faculty

The Student Body

Middle School (grades 6-8) serves 170 students.

Total Number of Day Students (grades 6-12) – 465 students from throughout the East Bay attend Athenian:

- 56% from the local area (Alamo, Danville, and San Ramon)
- 11% from Walnut Creek and Concord
- 12% from Oakland, Berkeley, and Castro Valley
- 11% from Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda
- 8% from Pleasanton, Dublin, and Livermore
- 2% from other Bay Area communities

Note: A greater number of students attend the Upper School from the Oakland/Berkeley area.

Boarding Students - Sixty boarding students attend Athenian from around the country and the world. International and domestic students join in a cross-cultural boarding experience.

Varied Backgrounds - The Athenian student body exhibits a rich variety of ethnic, cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, forming an inclusive community that emphasizes respect for each individual. More than 55% of the student body are students of color (African-American, Asian American, Latino/Hispanic, or multi-racial). Recent International students represent 16 different countries. The financial aid budget, over $3.3 million, supports socioeconomic diversity (22% receive aid).
The Athenian School Faculty

Athenian faculty are noted for expertise in their subject, enthusiasm for teaching, multiple roles on campus, and resulting strong relationships with students. 74% hold MAs or Ph.D. degrees. Athenian faculty bring a wealth of real-life experience to the classroom. Some have authored books, worked for the Peace Corps, been lab scientists, had children, run marathons, spoken at conferences, been wilderness first responders, lived and worked abroad, run their own business, and have been college professors.

Middle School Faculty

Lauren Railey
Head of Middle School
B.A. Middlebury College
M.A.T. Brown University

Erika Argueta-Connor
Spanish 1C
B.A. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Amherst, MA
M.A. Marlboro Graduate Center, Marlboro, VT
M.A. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Amherst, MA

Samantha Bishop
Math
B.A. Regent’s University of London
M. Ed. The University of Bridgeport

Peter Bonfanti
Math
M.A. La Salle University
B.A. Princeton University

Erin Brindley
Science 8
B.A. Sonoma State University
M.Ed. Saint Mary’s College of California

Justin Guerra
English 6
B.A., M.A University of San Diego
M.F.A. Columbia University

Rachel Halliday
Science 6
B.S. Bowdoin College
M.A. California State University, East Bay

Jacalyn Kildare
Art 6, 7
B.F.A. San Francisco Art Institute
M.F.A. University of Texas at Austin

Lanny Lee
Art 8
B.F.A. California College of Art

Stephen (Esteban) Marotti
Spanish, 1A, 1B
B.A. Wayne State University

Meng Liao
Mandarin, 1A, 1B, 1C
B.A. Huazhong University of Science and Technology
M.S. University of Pennsylvania

Chris McCulloch
Dean of Students, English 7
B.A. University of California, Berkeley
M.A. University of Virginia

Daniel Means
Music & Choir 6, 7, 8
B.A. University of California, Santa Cruz
M.M.Ed. Teacher’s College, Columbia University

Sven Miller
Social Studies, 6, 7
B.A. University of California, Berkeley

Todd Miller
Math
B.A., M.A. University of California, Berkeley

Charlie Raymond
Dean of Faculty
English 8
B.A. University of California, Berkeley

Nabil Saad
Physical Education 6, 7, 8
B.A. San Francisco State University
M.A. Concordia University Irvine

Andy Shinkle
English 7, Art 6
B.A. University of North Texas
M.Ed. Texas State University

Jenny Staller
Middle School Librarian
B.A. English
M.A. Library and Information Services, San Jose State University

Leah Webb
Science 7
B.A. Vanderbilt University
M.A. Harvard University

Ted Webb
Social Studies 8, Math
B.A. University of California, San Diego

Toneka Webb
Middle School Counselor
B.A. Chico State University
M.A. California State University, East Bay

Matt Zahner
Social Studies 7, Math
B.A. Marquette University

Nadia Zaks
French, 1A, 1B, 1C
B.A. University of Puget Sound: French
M.A. Universite de Paris IV Sorbonne (Paris, France): Modern Literature
The Middle School daily schedule provides opportunities and benefits for students including 60-minute classes that offer a slower daily pace for more in-depth, project based learning.

- **Rotating class schedule** provides the benefit of having classes at different times during a four-day rotation.
- **Conference and Collaboration (C & C)** gives all students time for projects, homework, and to get help from a teacher.
- **Flex period** provides time for grade-level programs including life skills, study skills, and computer programming.
- **The music** program is included in the daily schedule. Seventh and eighth graders have the choice of art, band, or choir.
- **Physical Education (PE)** is taken by all students for a full year.
- **Electives** are required programs incorporated in the daily schedule.
- **Advisory** guides students on their middle school journey as a liaison, confidante, and advocate.
Mission
The Athenian School prepares students for the rigorous expectations of college and for a life of purpose and personal fulfillment.

We offer a challenging academic program with a difference: intellectual inquiry is active, learning is interactive, the disciplines are interrelated, and analysis and creativity thrive simultaneously. The acquisition of knowledge becomes authentic and joyous.

We cultivate the personal qualities of each student to become an integrated human being with integrity, strong moral character, aesthetic sensitivity, and physical well being. The Athenian community requires students to face life directly through open communication, while developing their inner strength to exceed their perceived potential and emerge compassionate, responsible adults.

We instill an appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and cultures, society and the natural world. We value the power and beauty of multiculturalism within our diverse community. We embrace the principles of democratic governance, stewardship of the environment, respect for human dignity, and service as a way of life.

By providing an atmosphere of intellectual, artistic, and physical challenge within the warmth of a nurturing community, we develop in our students the confidence and skills required to meet the complexities of their future.