

BLACKSBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL

Program of Studies

Blacksburg Middle School provides sixth, seventh, and eighth grade education for students. The majority of our student body comes from five feeder elementary schools in Blacksburg. The teachers, administration and support personnel of the school create and maintain a middle school learning environment that is relevant to and developmentally appropriate for early adolescents. The interdisciplinary teaching approach of the middle school helps students develop knowledge and understanding that span language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine and practical arts, as well as health and physical education.

Staff members of BMS are advocates for each child and must live this belief on a daily basis. To do so we must have one voice, sharing the same caring and motivating themes in all of our relationships. When students hear the same positive guidance from each staff member and know we all have their best interest at heart, it creates a unity that we all seek. Our vision at BMS is to create and maintain a safe and nurturing learning community emphasizing literacy and respect for all others.

Blacksburg Middle School's program of studies reflects the philosophy of the school which says, in part, "...each student in the middle school deserves an education which is suited to her/his physical, mental, social, intellectual and emotional needs. Because of the great diversity of growth patterns in children between the ages of ten and fourteen, emphasis is placed upon instruction which will allow each student to develop according to his/her own potential and

motivation." The school's curriculum allows students to explore various academic disciplines, pursue special interests, and participate in career exploration.

In keeping with the school's philosophy, classes are generally heterogeneously grouped. Multiple math offerings at each grade level do result in some grouping of students, particularly in the area of mathematics. Our program is an inclusive program, with students with special needs included as full members of each classroom. The school program is organized to include a core block of time for academic subjects as well as time for fine arts, related arts, health education and physical education.

Our organizational structure centers around interdisciplinary teams of teachers. On two-teacher teams, one teacher provides instruction in language arts and social studies while the other teaches math and science. Four-teacher teams are made up of one instructor for each of the core subjects. These teachers work together to provide consistency and unity to the students assigned to their team. Teaming in this way also facilitates collaboration, interdisciplinary cooperation, monitoring of student behavior, and more efficient communication with parents/guardians. Teams provide a "family" learning environment for each student. We use this team approach to invite both students and their parents/guardians to work with the teachers, counselors, and administrators in building a positive, stimulating learning environment.

Blacksburg Middle School utilizes a seven period class schedule. Student movement through the building is minimized by clustering team classrooms by pod and strategically scheduling certain classes.

In sixth grade each student takes physical education and health, keyboarding, a fine arts course, and/or a related arts exploratory in addition to the four core classes. Students choose their fine arts class from band, chorus, or visual arts. Related arts exploratory classes are nine-week rotations through courses, such as the following: agriscience, general music, foreign language, or technology education. Seventh and eighth grade students take the four core courses, health and physical education, and either two semester courses and a year-long fine arts class or four semester courses. Eighth graders may take a year-long course for high school credit in Spanish I, Latin I, or French I in lieu of health and physical education.

All course offerings are dependent upon staff availability and sufficient student interest in the class.

Special Education

The Special Education program serves students with special needs in compliance with eligibility requirements specified by federal, state and local regulations.

BMS is an inclusive school; students with special needs are full members of each classroom. Special education teachers and/or assistants collaborate with the classroom teachers in working with heterogeneous (all ability levels) groups of students. Special education teachers are members of the core teaching team. This program provides for individual differences among students by making the accommodations needed for optimal academic success. Inclusion allows students with disabilities to share legitimate membership with their peers both in the classroom and throughout the school, while still pursuing individually-suited educational outcomes. All students benefit from the additional resources

this arrangement brings into the classroom. The expected long-term effect of exposure to inclusion is that students come to realize that everyone has unique abilities and talents and that individual differences have value.

School Counseling and Guidance Program

The counseling and guidance program in our school is available to help students, parents, and teachers develop positive learning experiences. The program consists of a variety of services and activities, including individual and group counseling, parent and teacher consultation, group guidance, information services, referral to other programs and services in the community, and student testing. Counselors from New River Valley Community Services also work in the BMS guidance office to provide individual counseling to students. Students are seen by referral; questions regarding these services may be directed to your child's guidance counselor.

The primary services of the school counselors involve direct assistance to students in the school. For this reason, the major portion of the counselors' day is scheduled with services for students. The counselors have state licensure as professional school counselors with training in counseling, human development, learning theory, consulting, tests and measurement, career development, research, and other areas appropriate to the practice of counseling in a school. Written information about the school counseling and guidance program is sent home each year in the school calendar or in an informational pamphlet. Parents/guardians are invited to call or schedule a meeting with the counselors to discuss questions or concerns.

Required Courses

Core Curriculum

Each student at Blacksburg Middle School participates in four core courses each day. Following are descriptions of the courses for each grade level.

Language Arts

Sixth Grade Language Arts students will be reflective participants in classroom discussions. The student will present personal opinions and understand differing points of view, distinguish between fact and opinion, and analyze the effectiveness of group communication skills. Analysis and comparison will require application of critical reading and reasoning skills. The student will read a variety of fiction and nonfiction independently for appreciation and comprehension, including classics. The student also will plan, draft, revise, and edit narratives, descriptions, and explanations with attention to composition and style, as well as sentence formation, usage, and mechanics. In addition, writing will be used as a tool for learning academic concepts, and available technology will be used as appropriate.

Seventh Grade Language Arts students will continue to develop oral communication skills and will become more knowledgeable about the effects of verbal and nonverbal behaviors in oral communication. The student will continue to refine written composition skills, with special attention to word choice, organization, style, and grammar. The student will continue vocabulary development through a study of figurative language. The student will increase his/her proficiency in the use of print and electronic information resources and will learn how to give credit to secondary reference sources.

Eighth Grade Language Arts students will learn and apply interviewing techniques. The student will plan, draft, revise, and edit writing,

with emphasis on narratives, exposition, and persuasion. The student will become a skillful interpreter of the persuasive strategies used in mass media. The student will continue to develop an appreciation for literature through a study of literary elements contained in classics as well as contemporary selections. The student will describe themes or inferred main ideas, interpret cause-effect relationships, and draw conclusions from a variety of literary selections.

Mathematics

MCPS provides a comprehensive mathematics program to promote the achievement of every student. A key component of our program is ensuring that all secondary students are placed in mathematics courses that deliver an appropriate level of challenge. All MCPS middle schools collect and analyze multiple pieces of student data in order to make mathematics placement decisions, including; grades, test scores, and teacher recommendations. Parents will be informed of mathematics placement decisions for the coming school year before the end of the current school year.

Mathematics classes emphasize skills development and mastery of a variety of problem solving strategies in order to promote mathematics literacy. Courses are designed to develop connections between math concepts taught and the "real world." Several levels of mathematics are taught in which students participate in a variety of interdisciplinary units of study and enrichment activities that increase students' awareness of ways math connects with other subject areas. Following are the courses offered at each grade level:

Grade 6 Math 6, Advanced Math 6
Note: Students who successfully complete Advanced Math 6 may be eligible to take Advanced Math 7 or Algebra I in seventh grade.

Grade 7 Math 7, Advanced Math 7, Algebra I
Note: Students who successfully complete Advanced Math 7 may be eligible to take Algebra I in eighth grade.

Grade 8 Math 8, Algebra I, Geometry
Note: Students who successfully complete Math 8 may take Algebra I in ninth grade.

Math 6 and Math 7 are general math courses, covering topics including place value, numeration, whole number operations, problem-solving, ratio, proportion, geometry, fractions, decimals, percents, measurement, logical reasoning, integers, statistics, probability, linear equations and estimation.

Advanced Math 6, Advanced Math 7 and Math 8 are designed to develop the necessary skills for students to begin to think algebraically and to apply algebraic concepts. The emphasis will be on pre-algebra skill development, abstract problem solving, and some practical applications. Students who take these courses may take Algebra I in the next grade level.

Algebra I is a high school-credit course. Algebra I is a rigorous college preparatory course, designed to help students understand the basic structure of the real number systems and to incorporate these real numbers as students

learn to apply basic algebraic concepts and skills with speed and accuracy. Problem solving techniques are emphasized and refined through practical applications. Algebra is the basic language through which all higher mathematics is communicated.

Geometry is a high school-credit course. This college preparatory course uses the Euclidean approach to explore the relationships between lines, angles, and shapes while developing logical reasoning, organization of thought, application, and analytical thinking. This course reinforces algebraic skills and problem solving.

Science

The science program incorporates interdisciplinary activities that enhance each student's opportunity to build and utilize a wide range of middle level skills.

Sixth Grade General Science students bring varied interests from their elementary programs. These diverse interests and backgrounds are used to continue developing an appreciation for and knowledge of science by studying topics including cells and microbes, geology, matter, continuity of life, oceanography, forces and motion, and human health.

Seventh Grade Life Science students concentrate on biological concepts and ecological relationships.

Eighth Grade Physical Science is an introductory course in physics and chemistry. This sequence of instructional activities phases in the rising expectations for the appropriate application of acquired skills and concepts. All science courses have a strong laboratory component in which students

receive both structured activities (to reinforce the scientific method) and opportunities to investigate, experiment and draw conclusions from their own work. Field trips and guest speakers provide additional enrichment and career information.

Social Studies

The study of history and social science is vital in promoting a civic-minded, democratic society. All students need to know and understand our national heritage in order to become informed participants in shaping our nation's future in the global community. The social studies program incorporates key concepts important for all students. Students will develop analytical skills and understand social studies terms. Course work is designed to ensure that students will understand the following: maps, globes and their symbols, communities, civilization, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, government and its importance, economic principles, exploration and its impacts, historical figures and events, geography's impact on way of life, political and social movements, conflict, and the impact of technology. In addition to text materials, teachers use a variety of teaching strategies. This approach best serves our diverse population of learners and their individual learning styles.

Sixth Grade Social Studies

Students use skills for historical and geographical analysis to explore the early history of the United States and understand ideas and events that strengthened the union. The standards for this course relate to the history of the United States from pre-Columbian times until 1865. Students will continue to learn fundamental concepts in civics, economics, and geography as they study United States history and learn about change and continuity in our history. They also will study documents and

speeches that laid the foundation for American ideals and institutions and will examine the everyday life of people at different times in the country's history through the use of primary and secondary sources.

Seventh Grade Social Studies

Students will continue to use skills for historical and geographical analysis as they examine American history since 1865. The standards for this course relate to the history of the United States from the Reconstruction era to the present. Students should continue to learn fundamental concepts in civics, economics, and geography within the context of United States history. Political, economic, and social challenges facing the nation reunited after civil war will be examined as students develop an understanding of how the American experience shaped the world's political and economic landscapes.

Eighth Grade Social Studies

Standards for Civics and Economics examine the roles citizens play in the political, governmental, and economic systems in the United States. Students will examine the constitutions of Virginia and the United States, will identify the rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizens, and will describe the structure and operation of government at the local, state, and national levels. Students will investigate the process by which decisions are made in the American market economy and explain the government's role in it. The standards identify personal character traits, such as patriotism, respect for the law, willingness to perform public service, and a sense of civic duty, that facilitate thoughtful and effective active participation in the civic life of an increasingly diverse democratic society.

Physical Education and Health

Health education and physical education combine to motivate individuals to become focused on total body wellness. Health classes provide a foundation for developing skills, attitudes and behaviors that will assist students in establishing healthy lifestyles. Units of study focus on such topics as mental health, physical fitness, nutrition, family life and disease prevention.

Physical Education provides experiences which will enable students to become healthy, active and productive citizens. Conditioning, active participation, knowledge of rules, and development of skills are emphasized. Activities include traditional team sports, individual sports and leisure-time activities.

In order to ensure safety, comfort, and proper attire, students are encouraged to wear uniforms, athletic shoes, and sport socks in P.E. class. Uniforms may be ordered through the physical education department.

Fine Arts

Music and art are very important parts of the school curriculum. Each sixth grade student takes a semester of art and may choose to take band or chorus. Students may take additional Fine Arts courses in seventh and eighth grades (art, band, or chorus).

Sixth Grade Courses:

Beginning Art 6

This semester-length course is designed to meet the needs of all students at every skill level. Beginning Art introduces the student to both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art processes. Although emphasis is on the studio experience, students will also be exposed to a variety of artists, art concepts, and artistic styles. This class encourages individual expression and

growth while providing a strong foundation in the elements and principles of art.

Beginning Band

Sixth grade Band is for students who are interested in beginning instrumental music instruction for wind and percussion instruments. The class emphasizes the proper care and maintenance of the instrument as well as the fundamentals of quality tone production, technique and music reading. Varying aspects of music history, style and theory will also be discussed. Level 1 of a selected basic music series will be used to develop the knowledge and technique needed to perform Grade 1 music. The class will offer opportunities for the students to perform as soloists, in small ensembles and as a full band.

Sixth Grade Chorus

Sixth grade chorus is a full year course. Chorus is a study of music through singing with others both in unison and in harmony. Using music from many genres, time periods, languages, and cultures, students study the fundamentals of music and develop skills in proper vocal technique, tone quality, and sight reading. Students will perform Grade I and Grade II music. Public performances are held throughout the school year. Students sing in unison, two and three part harmony. This chorus class may be followed in seventh and eighth grade with Intermediate Chorus or Bel Canto.

Seventh and Eighth Grade Choices:

Intermediate Art 7

Intermediate Art is a full-year course available to seventh graders. This course provides further investigation of two and three-dimensional art processes and continues to

expose students to a variety of artistic styles and concepts. Emphasis on the seventh grade level remains firmly rooted in the studio experience while developing critical thinking skills and a deeper, more personal commitment to the study of art. Students interested in continuing with Advanced Art in eighth grade are encouraged to take this course.

Advanced Art 8

This course builds on the foundations laid in previous courses to provide further instruction and exploration in both two and three-dimensional art processes. While this remains a studio-based class, students will investigate more advanced topics as they relate to the production of their own work and the work of others. Students interested in continuing with art in high school are encouraged to take this course. The prerequisite for this course is one previous art course or written permission from an art instructor.

Intermediate Band

Intermediate Band is open to seventh grade students who have successfully completed one year of instrumental instruction, or who can pass a performance proficiency evaluation. The full-year class reviews Level I materials (scales, rhythms, terms, etc.) and will complete Level II (and sometimes Level III) of a selected method series. Grade I literature will be reviewed, and Grade II and III literature will be introduced. Further opportunities for students to perform as soloists, in small ensembles, and as a full band will be provided.

Advanced Band

Advanced band is a full-year course for eighth grade students who have successfully completed the Beginning and Intermediate levels of band or who can pass a performance proficiency evaluation. This class emphasizes continued development of quality tone production and

technique through the advanced study of scales, rhythm exercises, and the reading and performance of grades III and IV literature. A selected method book may be used as a supplement. Introduction to marching techniques may begin in the spring.

Intermediate Chorus

Intermediate chorus is open to seventh and eighth grade students who have successfully completed one year of choral instruction or who can pass a performance proficiency evaluation. Students who were not in chorus in sixth grade need the choral director to initial their schedule request form. This full year course will review basic vocal techniques, music fundamentals, and basic sight reading skills. Students will continue to increase their musicianship and musical knowledge and will work toward becoming independent singers. Music from many genres, time periods, languages and cultures will be studied and performed. Students will sing in unison, two and three part harmony (and sometimes four part harmony). Grade I literature will be reviewed and grade II and III literature will be introduced. Performances will be given throughout the school year and the more advanced students will have the opportunity to audition for honor choirs. .

Fine Arts Music Elective

This exploratory course gives students the opportunity to explore general music through instruments and other perspectives.

Bel Canto Singers

The Bel Canto Singers is an auditioned choir made up of seventh and eighth graders who have excelled in the choral program. Students interested in this ensemble must audition with the choral director.

Bel Canto Singers is a performance-based

class. This ensemble will perform music from a variety of time periods (Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary), styles and cultures. Students will have the opportunity to perform as soloists, in small ensembles and as a full choir. The class emphasizes continued development in vocal and choral techniques, music reading and theory skills, and diction in a variety of languages. The choir sings unison, two- three- and four-part harmony both accompanied and a cappella. Grade III and IV literature will be performed. Performances are presented throughout the school year and many of these students participate in the honor choirs offered at the county, district, state, regional, and national levels.

Boy Choir

Boy Choir is open to seventh and eighth grade boys who have successfully completed one year of choral instruction or who can pass a performance proficiency evaluation. Boys who were not in choir in sixth or seventh grade need the choral director to initial their course request form. This gender-specific class enables boys to more comfortably work through the vocal change that normally occurs in seventh through ninth grade. This full year course will review basic vocal techniques, music fundamentals, and basic sight reading skills. Students will continue to increase their musicianship and musical knowledge and will work toward becoming independent singers. Music from many genres, time periods, and cultures will be studied and performed. Students will continue learning proper diction for singing in multiple languages. Students will sing in unison, two and three part harmony (and sometimes four part harmony) using treble through bass vocal ranges. Performances will be given throughout the school year and students will have the opportunity to audition for honor choirs. When scheduling does not permit a separate period for the Boy Choir, this choir will be combined with Bel Canto.

Related Arts and Semester Courses

Related Arts courses are designed to emphasize personal growth, development of values, responsibility, and exploration of career possibilities. At the sixth grade level, Related Arts consists of two nine-week courses referred to as "Related Arts Exploratories." Exploratories are samplings of related arts courses offered as semester courses at the seventh and eighth grade levels.

Related Arts Exploratories are assigned by computer to sixth grade students in order to expose them to a variety of disciplines outside the core academic classes, allowing them to explore and discover individual talents and interests. Students in seventh and eighth grades may choose to pursue an area of interest by taking a semester course in that area. It is not necessary for students to have taken a related arts exploratory in sixth grade in order to take the semester course in an area. Likewise, choosing a semester of a related arts course in Seventh or Eighth grade that was taken as a Sixth grade exploratory is acceptable.

Please note that the Keyboarding course is a requirement. All sixth grade students are required to take a semester of keyboarding.

Agriscience: The Agriscience program is designed to help students gain an understanding of the agricultural industry. Students work in modules to learn about aquaculture, aquaponics and food, plant, soil, and animal science. Fish tanks and hydroponic systems serve as modern food production models. A greenhouse and calf pen give students hands-on opportunities with plants and animals. Students conduct several experiments in the modules listed above. In addition, projects are constructed in woodworking and metalworking, and

leadership skills are developed.

Floriculture: A Floral Business/Co-op class in which eighth grade students learn floral design, greenhouse operation, and agricultural business operation including finances, marketing, inventory, and sales. A lab fee will be offered to students who want to create floral projects for themselves.

Foreign Language Exploratory: During this nine-week class, sixth-graders learn simple conversations in all of the languages offered at Blacksburg High School: French, German, Spanish, Latin, and American Sign Language.

Making Music with Percussion Instruments: This course is a sixth grade exploratory course. This is a performance-oriented class in which percussion instruments from around the world are used to provide the students with hands-on exposure to the six elements of music (melody, harmony, rhythm, form, timbre, and expression). Students will be given instruction in fundamental playing techniques for the various instruments used. Basic note reading will be taught. Students will be exposed to the cultural influences related to the music being studied. The development of aural skills will be stressed.

Keyboarding: Students develop skills in touch typewriting and correct manipulation of the computer keyboard. Students will also develop skills using word processing and learn to type personal and business letters, outlines, manuscripts, and tabulated reports. Students will learn enhancing features of Microsoft Word software. It is a Montgomery County Schools requirement that each student will have taken a semester of Keyboarding before beginning ninth grade.

Technology Education: The goal of Technology Education is to provide all students

with a working knowledge of our technological world. Technology Education develops understanding of, and capability with, the principles, tools, materials, and processes integral to technological systems such as communication, production, power/energy, and transportation systems. Technology Education teaches students of all ages to apply knowledge, tools, and skills in designing, constructing, and evaluating solutions to “real world” technical problems.

Inventions and Innovations 8th Grade

This is an 18-week semester course offered to Eighth grade students. This class allows student to further their studies in Technology Education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). It allows students to make models of significant inventions that have advanced society. After studying these developments, students explore contemporary technological problems. Students apply systematic procedures to invent and manufacture new and innovative products.

High School-Credit Courses

Students in seventh and eighth grades may choose to participate in courses for high school credit. Students’ high school transcripts begin upon enrollment in these courses. The classes are taught at the level of courses taught to ninth-grade and older students, with the same policies, pacing and work load of regular high school courses. Please refer to the Student/Parent Handbook for information about the current policies for high school credit courses offered at the middle school.

Seventh and eighth grade students may choose to enroll in **Algebra I** and **Geometry** for their

math courses (see descriptions under Mathematics). Algebra I is a prerequisite for geometry.

Eighth grade students may choose to enroll in a foreign language course to replace two semester courses. Enrollment in Spanish I, Latin I Virtual, or French I requires the recommendation from your child's seventh grade English teacher. We also recommend that students have a "B" or better average in English 7 in order to enroll in a foreign language in eighth grade. **Foreign Language courses, for high school credit, are not open to sixth or seventh grade students.**

Latin I Virtual

Students begin to develop the cultural understanding and linguistic performance skills necessary to experience the culture of the classical world. Students will gain greater perspective of the present by examining the culture and language of the Romans in areas such as history, government, literature, art, architecture, philosophy, and religion. As students begin to understand the impact of Ancient Rome on the present, English vocabulary skills and an understanding of the structure of the language begin to develop. Students are encouraged to find examples of Roman culture, mythology, and language still being used in our modern world. Students who are enrolled in a Virtual Virginia World Language course will be required to take a nationally recognized examination in their language as part of this course. Student work will be required outside of class time.

Spanish I

This introductory course concentrates on the acquisition of practical vocabulary and grammatical concepts to provide a basis for simple listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The cultures of Spanish speaking

countries will be explored. The course stresses fundamental skills and knowledge that provides a basic preparation for further scholarship.

French I

This beginning level course concentrates on conversational approach to the language, in preparation, for example, for travel and tourism or business associations. Student acquisition of practical vocabulary and grammatical concepts provide a basis for simple listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, students will begin to learn about France and other francophone countries. The course provides the linguistic understanding of the language in preparation for further scholarship.

Parents may request that grades for high school credit courses, taken in middle school, be omitted from the student's transcript and the student not earn high school credit for the course. The request must be made (on the appropriate form) to the middle school principal by July 1 following the year in which the student completed eighth grade. Parents of students who transfer to Montgomery County Public Schools must request that grades for high school credit courses taken in middle school be omitted from the student's transcript within sixty (60) calendar days of enrollment.

English as a Second Language

Students whose first language is not English may choose to enroll in E.S.L. The course is designed to help students develop skills and knowledge necessary for successful communication in English. Students usually take this course in lieu of related arts courses and may continue in the course as long as necessary.