

RENAISSANCE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Course Description Booklet
2019- 2020

ABOUT RMS

Our mission at Renaissance at Rand Middle School is to inspire individuals to think critically, responsibly and empathetically. At the heart of Renaissance are students and faculty who investigate ideas through an interdisciplinary, thematic curriculum. We design our program to support all dimensions of student growth: socially, emotionally and physically as well as intellectually. We have an extended school day four days per week, allowing Fridays to be a day of curricular extension through field research trips, elective classes and community service activities. Renaissance develops well-rounded learners who are critical and creative thinkers. Through the hands-on community service curriculum, all students are taught that they have a place in, and responsibility toward, their community.

What characterizes Renaissance at Rand Middle School?

- A culture where students are motivated to work individually and cooperatively on challenging tasks, projects, and activities
- Students who are engaged, persistent, confident, and proud of their work
- Teachers who connect learning to students' lives
- Diversity of learning contexts and modalities
- Active learning guided by salient themes, problems, issues, or questions

Learning at Renaissance is rooted in challenging, investigative work aligned to Common Core and other state standards, resulting in the growth of autonomous learners who make connections with each other and the world around them in a lively, inspirational atmosphere.

EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR ALL

We hold the following core values:

- Students should have access and exposure to all educational experiences and all academics
- We have a role in developing students' empathy through acceptance and understanding of all kinds of people
- We must foster multicultural awareness
- Students need and deserve support to grow as resilient learners and as responsible, compassionate human beings
- Emotional safety is essential for learning to take place
- Connections to Real Life experiences with hands-on, minds-on learning are essential
- Students should be taught to think critically and creatively
- Cooperative learning is important for social and academic growth
- We must help students develop life skills, coping skills, and independence as learners

- Community service and activism should be encouraged as life-long habits
- Students learn optimally in a small environment
- We must all remain open to self-examination
- All educators should be involved and invested in our students' education

Our core values frame our work with students. Our school was founded on the premise of access and equity for all. We believe deeply that all students can learn, that they learn best in open, inclusive classrooms, and that learning occurs in many settings and modalities. We do not have “pull-out” or “replacement” classes and we have blurred the line between general education and special education settings to benefit of our students. Our teachers are skilled at modifying curriculum to meet individual students' needs. Our paraprofessionals are skilled at supporting student learning of all types. All Renaissance adults are mindful of the diverse, divergent backgrounds and preparedness of our students. We are proud of the quality and the integrity of the education that all of our students receive. To personalize learning, we offer afternoon enrichment classes designed to meet individual student needs and preferences, as well as in-depth classes in all core subjects, related arts, and electives.

OUR FRAMEWORK

Students are organized into four homerooms per grade level, led by the English Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies teachers. Teachers are part of grade level instructional teams and cross-graded departments by discipline. The teams provide an optimal student-teacher ratio so that both group and individual pedagogical techniques can be used. The school operates on an extended day four times a week, affording 196 hours of additional instructional time during the school year.

In keeping with the idea of Renaissance as an age of enlightenment, all sixth graders take art, dance, music, technology, physical education, health, and world language in addition to their core subjects. Seventh and eighth graders have more choices and more chances to specialize in areas of interest. In math, all Renaissance students have completed Algebra I by the end of eighth grade and may take Geometry, also. Both courses follow the high school curriculum.

The schedule is unique. Block scheduling encourages students to spend extended periods of time concentrating and working on specific activities. Specifically, students work in the four core (mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies) areas for 80 minutes twice a week. Mathematics and English Language Arts are further bolstered with additional forty-minute periods of instruction on the other three days. A daily Advisories curriculum supports student growth in social, emotional and executive functioning skills.

Our Renaissance at Rand community is composed of a rich diversity of family backgrounds, geographic origins, achievement histories, talents, needs and strengths. We value and celebrate differences which make us unique and commonalities which unite us.

The teachers at Renaissance at Rand Middle School have crafted a dynamic curriculum where student work is evaluated through various modes of assessment. The thematic approach of our curriculum centers on essential questions. The structure of the school is based on commitment to maximum use of instructional time.

Renaissance students enjoy a range of extracurricular activities throughout the year. These include Robotics Club, ECO Club, Dance Club, Model UN, Model Congress, plays and musical productions, school dances, spirit weeks, honor rolls, Student of the Marking Period (STOMP) and annual performance awards.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

CORE COURSES

Students are enrolled in 5 Core Content Area Classes: English Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Science, and World Language.

English Language Arts

- ELA 6
- ELA 7
- ELA 8

Social Studies

- SS 6
- SS 7
- SS 8

Mathematics

- Math 6
- Algebra A Accelerated
- Math 7
- Algebra B Accelerated
- Math 8
- Geometry

Science

- Science 6
- Science 7
- Science 8

World Language

- French 6, French 7, or French 8
- Latin 6, Latin 7, or Latin 8
- Spanish 6, Spanish 7, & Spanish 8

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI) COURSES

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a continuum of evidence-based services available to all students, which range from universal strategies to highly individualized and intensive support. Through the ongoing monitoring of student progress, teachers are required to employ differentiated or intense interventions when students do not improve in response to lesser interventions. If students do not respond to intervention instruction, they may be referred to the I&RS (Intervention and Referral Service) committee for Special Education service evaluation. Courses that are offered are as follows:

- Read 180
- Reading & Literacy (Literacy Lab)
- Math Lab

PHYSICAL EDUCATION & HEALTH

Physical Education

Health

Dance

SPECIAL EDUCATION COURSES

Study Skills

This course is open to students who are classified and the Special Education department.

ELECTIVE COURSES- 9th & 10th Period

Advanced 3D Design

Students will learn 3D design using Fusion 360. The emphasis will be on the design aspect of this latest technology but there will be time for the students to also print many of their designs on the 3D printers. This class will be for more advanced 3D designing. Class size will be limited. Prerequisite: 3 D Design last spring.

(Beginning) Guitar and Keyboard Class

Learn to 'jam out' on your favorite pop and rock songs on acoustic guitar and keyboard. Using a visual approach, students will begin with easy tabs and open chords on guitar. Keyboard players will learn to read visual charts that make playing chords easy and accessible. This learning method makes playing fun and simple. No previous experience necessary.

Brass

All sixth graders taking a brass instrument in Band must take this course on Thursdays.

Conversational French

This course is devoted to those students who wish to go beyond the lessons in French class and explore more challenging work in all four components of language learning. Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Listening. The goal is to help the student to become fluent in French. Teacher approval needed.

Conversational Spanish

This class is for students interested in entering high school at the Spanish 3 or 4 Honors level. This class is designed to quickly increase fluency in Spanish, during the class we will not speak one word of English. We will role-play typical situations faced, watch Spanish movies, have debates in Spanish, speak about current events in Spanish, and more. Teacher approval needed.

Dance Company

(MHS Dance Company, Advanced Dance Class and beyond) Learn and perform dance styles and techniques. Also includes how to write a resume, a bio, etc. for auditions day. This year long course is completed with a dance showcase at the end of each semester. This course is by audition, only.

Film Making

Create film(s) from start to finish, learning to do numerous different jobs in the film industry such as Cinematographer, Screenwriter, Actor and Editor. Students will collaborate to write screenplays, act in their group's film, shoot raw footage using a variety of professional camera angles, and edit their own unique final cut version of their group's film using transitions, sound track, special effects, titles and end credits.

Let's Recap

This is your opportunity to revisit your daily learning experiences...get help in areas that you did not quite understand, read a good book, or begin some of your homework. Please note: this is not a time for socializing, but rather an opportunity to get a head start on your learning experiences.

Mindfulness

This enrichment class is all about stress management, mostly through mindfulness and meditation. Studies have proven that practicing mindfulness lowers stress levels and provides many health benefits. Studies have also shown that young people who practice mindfulness get higher grades and find more effective ways of dealing with adverse circumstances, resulting in fewer conflicts, write-ups and detentions. This class will explore different types of meditation:

- guided meditation
- self-guided meditation
- long and short meditations
- body scans
- visual and aural tools

Students will learn how valuable quiet reflection can be and how to incorporate it into their daily lives. This class will also take time to explore other stress-management tools, such as

- How to become more organized and efficient.
- How to recognize what causes stress for us and how to more creatively avoid and deal with those situations.
- How to recognize how stress hides in our daily lives, what the health effects of stress are on the body and mind.

We will also discuss diet, sleep, exercise, hydration and emotions, for healthy minds and bodies are much more able to deal with daily stressors.

Photography

Do you like images? Nature photography? Do you like to look for patterns? The photography enrichment course may be for you. We will explore color vs. black and white photography, composition, street photography, and many other genres. Come discover your style and create some beautiful and fun images. By the end of this class, you will have generated a photography portfolio or thematic project.

Science Olympiad

Science Olympiad is a multi-grade class that focuses on 2 Renaissance teams preparing for a Statewide Science Olympiad competition held at a New Jersey college (location to be announced, typically held sometime in January). The class will allow students to work on one or two specific science related tasks or topics as defined by the New Jersey Science Olympiad organization. Teachers coach students through their individual topics as they work with a partner to master the requirements of their specific events. Students will be allowed to request a topic but must be flexible to agree to take on the responsibility of any of the topics as all the events must be represented by a Renaissance team member.

Song Writing

Discover your own hidden talent through the art of song writing. Students will begin this course by studying the form, structure, feel/groove, melody, rhythm and lyrics of various artists and styles. Using technology and standards instruments like guitar and keyboard, we will begin the process of writing our own original songs. Prize/Goal: Classes will vote on 'Best Original Song'. These songs will be performed by Renaissance performing groups.

Sports, Race and History

In this class students will analyze the parallels between the history of racism in government and society how the issue of race plays out in the sports world. We will look at the following: boxer, Jack Johnson, and the rise of white supremacy. We will also look at Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali and the Civil Rights Movement, and the 1968 Olympic Black power protest by Tommie Smith

and John Carlos. We will also look at the role(s) of present day athletes and their fight for social justice; Hands Up, don't shoot, equal pay for play in tennis and soccer and the anthem protest.

Video Game Production

The video game industry is one of the fastest growing in recent years and one of the few that did not experience a downturn during recent worldwide economic drops. In this class, students will learn about the history of an industry that is accepting workers with more varied skill sets than ever before as it expands to new realms. Students will get behind the scenes of video game production from game theory, to storyboarding, to modelling, and programming. This course will serve as an introduction to how video games are made.

Wars of the World

This class will cover the 20th century, including World Wars I and II, the Great Depression and the Cold War. We will look at major timelines, military history, social impacts and the influence of these events on our lives today.

What's Happening

This is a current events class that focuses on an in-depth topic each marking period.

World

WORLD is a simulation class, where students work together in groups to create their own countries. Students will make decisions about the world they build by creating projects such as maps, constitutions, national anthems, and so much more. Roles such as leaders, diplomats, spies, and citizens help students function within and among countries until ultimately one country controls the world.

Woodwinds

All sixth graders taking a woodwind instrument in Band must take this course.

3D Design

Students will learn 3D design using Tinkercad. The emphasis will be on the design aspect of this latest technology but there will be time for the students to also print many of their designs on the 3D printers. No experience necessary but there will also be time for more advanced 3D designing. Class size will be limited.

MANDATORY 6TH GRADE ELECTIVES

As part of the Renaissance philosophy we believe it is important to expose all students to all facets of the curriculum. All sixth graders will have Art, Music (see below), Physical Education, Dance, Technology, World Language, and four enrichment periods per week. Most of these traditional electives are automatically scheduled for you. In Music you have choices:

6th Grade Band

Learn to play a flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, or trombone. This course is open to brand new beginners and early beginners. We will learn to build our music reading skills as well as comfort and competence on our instrument. Students are responsible for renting their instrument for the duration of the course. In our experience, we found 6th graders learn rather quickly. Of course, students will need to put in the time and commitment. However, when they do, the results are fast and exciting! *If enrolling in Band, the student must also take Brass or Woodwinds, during their elective.

6th Grade Chorus

If you love to sing and you're passionate about music, join the 6th Grade Renaissance Singers. As a group, we will learn to develop the one instrument that is always with us...our voice! Students will work on proper technique, tone quality, and harmony. This group is open-minded to all styles of music. Bring your love for your music, your favorite songs, and your energy to sing!

** You may not choose both Band and Renaissance Singers as a sixth grader.*

Visual Literacy

Dance 6

Creative Writing

Italian

Technology

The introductory course consists of the study of the fundamentals of the language, using Italian as the language of instruction. Emphasis is on oral communication with grammar and vocabulary taught in context and the cultures of Italy and Italian-speaking communities worldwide presented using interactive activities, discussion, and readings.

7TH GRADE ELECTIVES

Band- 7th Grade

This is a course for students who have at least one year playing experience. Students must possess a basic level of note reading. This ensemble also includes a bass, guitar, and keyboard player, as well as a maximum of two percussionists. (These instruments require an audition.) This is a year-long course.

Chorus- 7th grade

This choral ensemble is for students who have a strong desire and interest in singing. Instruction revolves around developing our vocal technique and learning to sing in harmony. During this class, students also learn to create their own original harmonies. Repertoire includes a variety of styles and genres. This is a year-long course.

Hip Hop

A blend of high-energy “street style” movements. Typically performed to today’s rap and dub step music, the style invites everyone to take part and have fun! Hip Hop is the latest dance phenomenon at Renaissance. This course is completed with a dance showcase at the end of the semester.

Jazz Dance

Jazz dance is an exploration of style and presentation. Students will be introduced to varying styles of Jazz dance including Lyrical, Cool, Hip Hop, Traditional Jazz, Modern Jazz, Contemporary and Theater dance. Students will actively work and have fun while they clarify, codify, and uphold the authenticity of the genre.

Web Design

In order to compete in our fast-paced digital world, everyone entering the workforce today must have a strong understanding of the Internet and must have a presence in the World Wide Web. This 7th grade elective will give students the opportunity to become equipped with the tools to begin creating their presence on the Internet. Students will learn the basics of web design and web site creation. Students will first use web site composers then move on to learn basic HTML. Students will create web pages and learn how to publish them to the web.

8TH GRADE ELECTIVES

Band- 8th Grade

This is a course for students who have at least two years playing experience. Students must possess a basic level of note reading. This ensemble also includes a bass, guitar, and keyboard player, as well as a maximum of two percussionists.

Chorus 8th Grade

This choral ensemble is for students who have a strong desire and interest in singing. Instruction revolves around developing our vocal technique and learning to sing in harmony. During this class, students also learn to create their own original harmonies. Repertoire includes a variety of styles and genres.

Dance Unlimited

Love to Dance? Want a creative way to express your feelings. Then this is the class for you. You'll learn how to use movement that you create through a variety of dance styles.

Portfolio Workshop

This Open Studio/Independent Study workshop is for serious artists who want to submit a portfolio for acceptance into the High School Honors Art class. *NOTE: This is **not** a beginners 'crash course' to learn everything you will need to know. You will be expected to possess some skill and knowledge of the techniques required.* Portfolio requirements include still life, figure drawing, value drawing, 1 & 2 point perspective drawings, color theory, Self-Portrait and 3 Free Choice works. You will be working independently in class and at home on creating and perfecting these pieces for your portfolio. ***You will be required to complete and submit a portfolio to the High School in late Spring for a passing grade.***

Dance Company

(MHS Dance Company, Advanced Dance Class and beyond) Learn and perform dance styles and techniques. Also includes how to write a resume, a bio, etc. for auditions day. This year long course is completed with a dance showcase at the end of each semester. ***All students will be expected to participate in auditions.***

Let's Recap

This is your opportunity to revisit your daily learning experiences...get help in areas that you did not quite understand, read a good book, or begin some of your homework. Please note: this is not a time for socializing, but rather an opportunity to get a head start on your learning experiences. **YOU CAN SELECT THIS CLASS ONCE (M/W OR T/Th).**

ENRICHMENT COURSES (FRIDAY'S)

Community Service (All Grades)

A critical part of the Renaissance experience, students are placed throughout the community and neighboring schools.

Drama

Students write their own stage plays and perform. Depending on the group of students, music becomes more incorporated.

Survivor

Students learn about all kinds of survival skills, safety in varied outdoor environments, and how to react in emergency situations. We also build a comprehensive survivor kit for each student.

Legally Thinking

We will explore the United States legal system, including the US Constitution, with an emphasis on three key concepts: the rule of law, due process, and equal protection. Students will begin to understand the rights, responsibilities, and protections that these principles provide when they are followed, as well as what happens when they are not. We will also explore how people enter careers that support and impact the legal system, including lawyers and paralegals, law enforcement, elected representatives, and educators. Students will demonstrate understanding by creating and presenting information in slideshows and other visual formats, writing and analyzing fact patterns (including situations presented in current events and popular fiction), and class discussion.

Human Biology

Go through all the body systems and find out what makes your body work and how to take care of it. This class is a combination of readings, presentations, and videos. Questions are encouraged.