



## LEARNING PREP SCHOOL

1507 WASHINGTON STREET, WEST NEWTON, MA 02465  
617.965.0764 | LEARNINGPREP.ORG

# Middle School Course Descriptions by Grade Level

## 5th Grade

### **ELA class appropriate to skill level**

- Language Arts/Encoding & Decoding
  - Students are taught from the Wilson Reading program for decoding/encoding strategies and vocabulary development. Language arts and reading connections are made through daily encoding and decoding lessons. Students are exposed to a variety of daily warm ups (through activities and hands-on games and/or digital activities) and engaging instructional lessons. Pragmatic language skills including staying on topic, taking turns, and reading non-verbal messages and interpreting body language. History and science courses teach students the mechanics and structure of content area composition writing. (Note: Students are leveled according to their progress in the Wilson program.)
- Reading Comprehension
  - Reading Comprehension focuses on selected passages, short stories, and chapter books. Stories and passages covering both fiction and nonfiction are read aloud and/or digitally presented at the instructional level. During daily lessons, students have an opportunity to analyze text based on the essential “Wh” questions (when, where, why), develop vocabulary, and share information about the text. Students also learn the key words to utilize various Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps are used in order to track supporting details, organize characters and their descriptions, and extract main ideas. Previewing, reviewing, and visualizing vocabulary and events encourage students to make meaningful connections to maximize comprehension. Class discussions offer students the opportunity to share connections with each other.

### **Math class appropriate to skill level**

- Students work from the Number Worlds curriculum and will be grouped by ability level. Concepts which students will learn can range from comparing whole numbers by their place values to operations with addition and subtraction of whole numbers. Concepts of time and money are also reviewed, along with one-step word problems reflecting real-world scenarios where students would decide which mathematical operation to use in order to solve the problem correctly. Calculator usage will be occasionally permitted; however students will spend a significant amount of time working towards proficiency in computational skills without the assistance of a calculator.

### **Social Studies**

- Students conduct an entry level survey of American history beginning with the societies of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and moving into the European Age of Exploration, colonization of the Americas by the Spanish, French, and English (among

others), establishment of the 13 American colonies and their journey to independence, and the aftermath of that independence and the achievements and challenges they faced afterwards, up to and through the Civil War.

- Written language skills are worked on at different levels in the Middle School depending on the level/skills of the students in the class. Skills worked on include generating complete sentences, generating cohesive paragraphs, generating cohesive essays, using correct capitalization, ending marks, grammar, and organizing content information using a variety of Thinking Maps.

### **Science**

- Engaging in science and engineering practices and concepts, students explore topics such as the Earth-Sun-Moon relationship, Earth systems, human activity affecting these systems, matter, motion and energy, as well energy flow as it relates to ecosystems. While every student has their unique writing goals as outlined in their individualized plans, students complete short writing prompts of 1-3 sentences in classwork as well as a number of longer (5-8 sentence paragraphs) writing projects throughout the academic year.

### **Middle School Health**

- Middle School Health and Student Issues follow the Curriculum Frameworks set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for Comprehensive Health education. These classes meet once a week and are taught by a school counselor. They use a psycho-educational group format and focus on topics including: social communication, bullying prevention, internet safety, emotional/behavioral self-regulation, disability awareness, basic substance/alcohol use/abuse awareness, hygiene, puberty, and nutrition.

## **6th Grade**

### **ELA class appropriate to skill level**

- Language Arts/Encoding & Decoding
  - Students are taught from the Wilson Reading program for decoding/encoding strategies and vocabulary development. Language arts and reading connections are made through daily encoding and decoding lessons. Students are exposed to a variety of daily warm ups (through activities and hands-on games and/or digital activities) and engaging instructional lessons. Pragmatic language skills including staying on topic, taking turns, and reading non-verbal messages and interpreting body language. History and science courses teach students the mechanics and structure of content area composition writing. (Note: Students are leveled according to their progress in the Wilson program.)
- Reading Comprehension
  - Reading Comprehension focuses on selected passages, short stories, and chapter books. Stories and passages covering both fiction and nonfiction are read aloud and/or digitally presented at the instructional level. During daily lessons, students have an opportunity to analyze text based on the essential “Wh” questions (when, where, why), develop vocabulary, and share information about the text. Students also learn the key words to utilize various Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps are used in order to track supporting details, organize characters and their descriptions, and extract main ideas. Previewing, reviewing, and visualizing vocabulary and events encourage students to make meaningful connections to maximize comprehension. Class discussions offer students the

### **Math class appropriate to skill level**

- Students work from the Number Worlds curriculum and will be grouped by ability level. Concepts which students will learn can range from addition and subtraction of multi-digit whole numbers to basic operations involving fractions. Place value with whole numbers is reinforced, and decimal place value is also introduced, depending on the level of the class. More advanced concepts of time and money are reinforced, along with one-step word problems which reflect real-world scenarios where students would decide which mathematical operation to use in order to solve the problem correctly. Calculator usage will be occasionally permitted; however students will spend a significant amount of time working towards proficiency in computational skills without the assistance of a calculator.

### **Social Studies**

- Students learn about the beginning of civilization beginning with hunters/gatherers through the agricultural revolution, and then learn about ancient civilizations including the civilizations of Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylon, Assyria, the Hittites, the Phoenicians, and the Egyptians). Students also learn about the geography of the Middle East, Africa, and Europe throughout the year as they study the civilizations.
- Written language skills are worked on at different levels in the Middle School depending on the level/skills of the students in the class. Skills worked on include generating complete sentences, generating cohesive paragraphs, generating cohesive essays, using correct capitalization, ending marks, grammar, and organizing content information using a variety of Thinking Maps.

### **Science**

- Students use models and engage in activities that help them relate structure and function in their world on both the macro and microscopic level. Topics include weather, Earth systems, and the relationship of Earth to the sun, planets, and other objects in the solar system. Writing is intrinsic to the curriculum and includes both short writing prompts such as making predictions prior to experiments and/or reactions following them, brief descriptions of what is seen under a microscope, or short informational text. Longer writing tasks exploring cause-effect relationships, comparisons or contrasts, tracing a process, or construct a persuasive argument are also assigned.

### **Middle School Health**

- Middle School Health and Student Issues follow the Curriculum Frameworks set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for Comprehensive Health education. These classes meet once a week and are taught by a school counselor. They use a psycho-educational group format and focus on topics including: social communication, bullying prevention, internet safety, emotional/behavioral self-regulation, disability awareness, basic substance/alcohol use/abuse awareness, hygiene, puberty, and nutrition.

## **7th Grade**

### **ELA class appropriate to skill level**

- Language Arts/Encoding & Decoding
  - Students are taught from the Wilson Reading program for decoding/encoding strategies and vocabulary development. Language arts and reading connections are made through daily encoding and decoding lessons. Students are exposed to

a variety of daily warm ups (through activities and hands-on games and/or digital activities) and engaging instructional lessons. Pragmatic language skills including staying on topic, taking turns, and reading non-verbal messages and interpreting body language. History and science courses teach students the mechanics and structure of content area composition writing. (Note: Students are leveled according to their progress in the Wilson program.)

- Reading Comprehension
  - Reading Comprehension focuses on selected passages, short stories, and chapter books. Stories and passages covering both fiction and nonfiction are read aloud and/or digitally presented at the instructional level. During daily lessons, students have an opportunity to analyze text based on the essential “Wh” questions (when, where, why), develop vocabulary, and share information about the text. Students also learn the key words to utilize various Thinking Maps. Thinking Maps are used in order to track supporting details, organize characters and their descriptions, and extract main ideas. Previewing, reviewing, and visualizing vocabulary and events encourage students to make meaningful connections to maximize comprehension. Class discussions offer students the opportunity to share connections with each other.

### **Math class appropriate to skill level**

- Students work from the Number Worlds curriculum and will be grouped by ability level. Concepts students will learn can range from multiplication and division of whole numbers to operations involving fractions and mixed numbers. Place value with whole numbers, as well as decimals are also covered. One and two-step word problems which reflect real-world scenarios where students would decide which mathematical operation(s) to use in order to solve the problem correctly are also covered. Calculator usage will be occasionally permitted; however students will spend a significant amount of time working towards proficiency in computational skills without the assistance of a calculator.

### **Social Studies**

- Students learn about Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome and then move on to the geography of Asia and learn about the rise of the Islamic Empires, China, and Japan before covering the Kingdoms of Africa. An examination of the founding of the religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam and their impact on the culture and history is covered as well during the course of study.
- Written language skills are worked on at different levels in the Middle School depending on the level/skills of the students in the class. Skills worked on include generating complete sentences, generating cohesive paragraphs, generating cohesive essays, using correct capitalization, ending marks, grammar, and organizing content information using a variety of Thinking Maps.

### **Science**

- The focus for students is on systems, cycles, and interconnections. Areas of study include plate tectonics, interactions of humans and Earth processes, ecosystems, and the transfer of energy. Writing practice is incorporated into the curriculum via grammar practice, short-answer questions, reflections, and a main writing piece that throughout the year will include three or more of the following: a narrative story, an informational text report or slide, a creative piece such as a poem or interview, and a persuasive or comparative essay.

## **Middle School Health**

- Middle School Health and Student Issues follow the Curriculum Frameworks set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for Comprehensive Health education. These classes meet once a week and are taught by a school counselor. They use a psycho-educational group format and focus on topics including: social communication, bullying prevention, internet safety, emotional/behavioral self-regulation, disability awareness, basic substance/alcohol use/abuse awareness, hygiene, puberty, and nutrition.

## **8th Grade**

### **ELA class appropriate to skill level**

- Language Arts/Encoding & Decoding
  - Students are taught from components from the Wilson Reading and Megawords programs for decoding/encoding strategies and vocabulary development. Language arts and reading connections are made through daily encoding and decoding lessons. Students are exposed to a variety of daily warm ups (through activities and hands-on games and/or digital activities) and engaging instructional lessons. Pragmatic language skills including staying on topic, taking turns, and reading non-verbal messages and interpreting body language. History and science courses teach students the mechanics and structure of content area composition writing.
- Reading Comprehension
  - Reading comprehension classes focus on guided reading instruction utilizing short articles and lengthier stories to strengthen and build vocabulary, accuracy, proper phrasing, and comprehension. Students participate in class discussions and learn the importance of active listening and turn taking. After class discussion, learners answer both short answer and open response comprehension questions of factual and inferential nature. With teacher guidance, Thinking Maps are utilized to organize learned information. Daily lessons include the introduction and application of new vocabulary, the development of close reading skills, and the practice of proper phrasing and expression. Students also investigate the analytical skill of drawing conclusions by supporting ideas with evidence from the text.

### **Math class available based on appropriate skill level**

- **Middle School Math**
  - Students work from the Number Worlds curriculum and will be grouped by ability level. Concepts which students will learn can range from multiplication and division of multidigit numbers to operations with fractions and decimals. Students at the highest levels will work on Pre-Algebra related concepts in order to be ready for Algebra 1 in their 9th grade year. Calculator usage will be occasionally permitted; however students will spend a significant amount of time working towards proficiency in computational skills without the assistance of a calculator.
- **Pre-Algebra**
  - Students have the opportunity to gain proficiency with operations with fractions, decimals, and percents, along with understanding ratios and proportional relationships. Word problems and problem solving will continue to be reinforced, along with increased practice with multi-step problem solving. Students will gradually begin to work with the concept of variables and will gain an

understanding of the basic rules of Algebra in order to simplify expressions and solve equations for unknown quantities. Students will often be permitted to use calculators in the classroom as long as the focus is on problem solving and not solely on computational skills. Reinforcement of basic problem solving skills, such as solving word problems and reviewing skills with money and time, are also embedded within the curriculum.

- **Algebra 1**

- Students build off their initial understanding of basic Algebra skills in order to prepare for higher level problem solving, along with more multi-step equation solving. Working with linear representations and the concept of “rate of change” is also emphasized at this level. Students will examine this concept algebraically but will also work frequently with graphs and the idea of slope in order to visually represent a positive or negative rate of change. Students will often be permitted to use calculators in the classroom as long as the focus is on problem solving and not solely on computational skills. Reinforcement of basic problem solving skills, such as solving word problems and reviewing skills with money and time, are also embedded within the curriculum.

### **Social Studies**

- Students study the influences of how and why the Constitution was written and learn about the parts of the Constitution ( Preamble, 7 articles, and the Bill of Rights). Students also learn how government works by learning about the Legislative Branch, the Executive Branch, and the Judicial Branch of Government. Students will then learn about the government of Massachusetts.
- Written language skills are worked on at different levels in the Middle School depending on the level/skills of the students in the class. Skills worked on include generating complete sentences, generating cohesive paragraphs, generating cohesive essays, using correct capitalization, ending marks, grammar, and organizing content information using a variety of Thinking Maps.

### **Science**

- Students engage in activities that support their understanding of the cause and effect of key natural phenomena and designed processes. Topics include earth as a planet and its systems, heredity and evolution, matter and its interactions, and processing materials.

### **Middle School Health**

- Middle School Health and Student Issues follow the Curriculum Frameworks set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for Comprehensive Health education. These classes meet once a week and are taught by a school counselor. They use a psycho-educational group format and focus on topics including: social communication, bullying prevention, internet safety, emotional/behavioral self-regulation, disability awareness, basic substance/alcohol use/abuse awareness, hygiene, puberty, and nutrition.