



The Children's School · K - 8

The Children's School's Middle-Level Approach to High School Readiness

As a progressive school, we strive to create learning opportunities that, to the greatest extent possible, mirror and prepare students for the world they will encounter throughout their lives. At the same time, we are intentional in helping students build the skills necessary for their success and enjoyment during the high school experience.

Middle-Level High School Readiness Curricular Goals

Draws on a range of strategies to prepare for different forms of assessment.

Understands and applies commonly used study skills and test-taking strategies.

Advocates for own learning in the classroom.

Recognizes when it is necessary and appropriate to ask the teacher for guidance, help, or an adjustment to the task/assignment.

Comes to school/class prepared with necessary materials and preparatory work completed.

Takes and uses notes productively.

Independently keeps track of and follows own, class, and school schedules.

Volunteers relevant ideas, observations, and questions during class discussions or lectures.

Employs active listening techniques.

Demonstrates accountability to self and others for learning and academic progress.

Sets short and long-term academic goals, works toward them, assesses progress, and redirects when necessary.

Uses independent time purposefully.

Asks questions to clarify understanding, extend learning, and seek new meaning.

Self-evaluates prior to submitting projects or assignments.

Collaborates with others.

Recognizes diverse ways to solve problems, communicate ideas, model reality and apply procedures.

TCS Middle-Level Approach to Research

The ability to distinguish truth from falsehood is a crucial skill for all. At The Children's School, research is fundamental to our emergent curriculum as students explore their own interests and questions in all academic fields. Students in the Middle Level routinely engage in the full range of research activities, from asking questions and conducting preliminary research, to crafting and building support for a thesis, to creating a final product demonstrating their analysis of the information they have uncovered. In our project-based model of learning, students are supported and expected to share the results of their research with others and to take meaningful action based on what they have learned.

Middle-Level Research Curricular Goals

Conducts research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions and by posing problems.

Gathers, evaluates, and synthesizes information from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, electronic media, artifacts, people).

Determines the value of sources by evaluating their relevance and the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind their presentation.

Determines the credibility of sources based upon their origin, authority, and context; determines whether credible sources support each other.

Develops claims and/or explanations that can be supported by the available evidence.

Constructs arguments to support claims using clear reasons and relevant and sufficient evidence; acknowledges counterclaims as well as the strengths and limitations of evidence.

Constructs explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details, while acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses.

Presents claims and findings through speaking, writing, or multimedia forms, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound reasoning, and well-chosen details.

Cites sources appropriately.

Uses technology to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

Where appropriate, takes informed action as a result of the research process.

TCS Middle-Level Approach to Science

Our experiential approach to learning inspires students to engage with the world in the ways that scientists do: by posing questions, observing phenomena, recording data, and making and testing hypotheses. Students learn to distinguish between subjective judgment and factual analysis, and they come to appreciate scientific study as a means of advancing human understanding and dispelling ignorance and prejudice. Throughout the program, students experience the joy of discovery, the magnificence of nature, and the fragile balance of elements which makes our lives possible, and which all of us are responsible to maintain.

Middle-Level Science and Engineering Curricular Goals

Understands the basic definitions, methods and vocabulary of the most established scientific disciplines (e.g. biology, chemistry, physics, etc.).

Asks questions and defines problems specifying relationships between variables.

Asks questions that can be investigated within the scope of the classroom, outdoor environment, museums, and other public facilities with available resources and, when appropriate, frames a hypothesis based on observations and scientific principles.

Plans and carries out investigations both individually and collaboratively.

Identifies independent and dependent variables, controls, procedures, tools, and methods of data collection.

Reflects on outcomes and provides evidence to confirm or refute claims and hypotheses.

Applies scientific ideas or principles to design an object, tool, process, or system.

Constructs and presents arguments supported by empirical evidence and scientific reasoning to support or refute an explanation or a model for phenomena in the natural or designed world.

Uses models to describe phenomena and systems.

Understands the benefits and limitations of developing and using models to describe mechanisms or predict phenomena.

Identifies patterns in large data sets and use mathematical concepts to support explanations and arguments.

Uses mathematical representations to describe and/or support scientific conclusions and design solutions.

Analyzes investigations, distinguishing between correlation and causation, using basic statistical techniques of data and error analysis.

Analyzes and interprets data to determine similarities and differences in findings.

Undertakes and designs projects to construct and/or implement a solution that meets specific criteria and constraints.

Assesses the credibility and accuracy of methods and evidence in drawing conclusions.

* Adapted from the *Next Generation Science Standards* (June, 2016).

TCS Middle-Level Approach to Mathematics

We believe that every student can learn high level mathematics, and we strive to make the study of mathematics an open, engaging, and creative pursuit for all students. We intentionally pose problems and questions that elicit multiple solution paths and multiple representations from students. As students and teachers explore mathematical ideas and solutions, they engage together in the discourse, reasoning, and sense-making that are at the heart of mathematics. Our mathematics curriculum draws from established national standards and emphasizes number sense, algebraic problem-solving, reasoning and proof, and mathematical modeling. Our aim is that all students will appreciate mathematics both as a set of tools for exploring and explaining the world, and as a challenging and enjoyable activity in itself.

Middle-Level Mathematical Process Goals

Solves problems that arise in mathematics and in other contexts.

Seeks, applies, and adapts a variety of appropriate strategies and sources to solve problems.

Monitors and reflects on the process of mathematical problem solving.

Perseveres when challenged.

Makes and investigates mathematical conjectures.

Develops and evaluates mathematical arguments and proofs.

Selects and uses various types of reasoning and methods of proof.

Accepts uncertainty and conditionality of mathematical conclusions.

Organizes and consolidates their mathematical thinking through communication.

Communicates their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly to peers, teachers, and others.

Analyzes and evaluates the mathematical thinking and strategies of others.

Uses the language of mathematics to express mathematical ideas precisely.

Recognizes and uses connections among mathematical ideas.

Understands how mathematical ideas interconnect and build on one another to produce a coherent whole.

Recognizes and applies mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics.

Creates and uses representations to organize, record, and communicate mathematical ideas.

Selects, applies, and translates among mathematical representations to solve problems.

Uses representations to model and interpret physical, social, and mathematical phenomena.

Middle Level Mathematical Content Goals

Number and Operations

Works flexibly with fractions, decimals, and percents to solve problems.

Develops meaning for percents greater than 100 and less than 1.

Compares and orders fractions, decimals, and percents efficiently and finds their approximate locations on a number line.

Understands the meaning and effects of arithmetic operations with fractions, decimals, and integers.

Selects appropriate methods and tools for computing with fractions and decimals from among mental computation, estimation, calculators or computers, and paper and pencil, depending on the situation, and applies the selected methods.

Develops and analyzes algorithms for computing with fractions, decimals, and integers and develops fluency in their use.

Understands and uses ratios and proportions to represent quantitative relationships.

Develops, analyzes, and explains methods for solving problems involving proportions, such as scaling and finding equivalent ratios.

Uses the associative and commutative properties of addition and multiplication, and the distributive property of multiplication, to simplify computations.

Understands and uses the inverse relationships of addition and subtraction, multiplication and division, and squaring and finding square roots to simplify computations and solve problems.

Develops and uses strategies to estimate the results of rational-number computations and judge the reasonableness of the results.

Understands exponential and scientific notation.

Uses factors, multiples, and prime factorization to solve problems.

Algebra

Represents, analyzes, and generalizes a variety of patterns with tables, graphs, words, and, when possible, symbolic rules.

Develops a conceptual understanding of different uses of variables.

Uses symbolic algebra to represent situations and to solve problems, especially those that involve linear relationships.

Recognizes and generates equivalent forms for simple algebraic expressions and solves linear equations.

Graphs linear functions.

Solves problems involving rates.

Explores relationships between symbolic expressions and graphs of lines, paying particular attention to the meaning of intercept and slope.

Selects, creates, and uses appropriate graphical representations of data, including histograms and scatterplots.

Finds, uses, and interprets measures of center and spread, including mean and interquartile range.

Makes inferences about the meaning of data sets and their graphical representations.

Uses proportionality and a basic understanding of probability to solve problems.

Geometry and Measurement

Understands both metric and customary systems of measurement.

Understands relationships among units and converts from one unit to another within the same system.

Understands, selects, and uses units of appropriate size and type to measure angles, perimeter, area, surface area, and volume.

Solves problems involving scale factors, using ratio and proportion.

Understands how to abstract and use square and cube units.

Draws geometric objects with specified properties, such as side lengths or angle measures.

Uses geometric models to represent and explain numerical and algebraic relationships

Develops and uses formulas to determine the circumference of circles and the area of triangles, parallelograms, trapezoids, and circles and develops strategies to find the area of more-complex shapes.

Develops strategies to determine the surface area and volume of selected prisms, pyramids, and cylinders.

Creates and critiques inductive and deductive arguments concerning geometric ideas and relationships, such as congruence, similarity, and the Pythagorean relationship.

* Adapted from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* (2000).

TCS Middle-Level Approach to Social Studies

At The Children’s School, the social sciences offer opportunities for inquiry into the many processes that shape our culture, society, and world. As students learn about historical and contemporary events, they begin to uncover patterns, themes, and implications of human interaction over time and into the present. Through critical reading, academic discourse, and collective action, students situate themselves and their communities in historical and global contexts.

Middle-Level Social Studies Curricular Goals

Undertakes historical investigations by asking questions about the past, gathering information from primary and secondary sources, analyzing connections among historical events, and developing and defending claims about the past.

Compares and contrasts different historical accounts and analyzes how people’s perspectives influence what information is available in the historical sources they create.

Explains how and why individuals or groups hold different perspectives, and how their perspectives can change over time.

Explains multiple causes and effects of historical events.

Analyzes relationships between historical events and present-day circumstances.

Explains the origins, functions, and structure of the U.S. government with reference to the Constitution and other founding documents.

Understands the role and responsibility of active civic engagement in maintaining a healthy democracy.

Describes the roles of political, civic, economic, and other organizations in shaping people’s lives.

Understands the geographic relationships between people, cultures, and environments and how these relationships change over time.

Understands that social change, or the prospect of it, promotes conflict because social, economic, and political changes usually benefit some groups more than others.

TCS Middle Level Approach to Social Justice

Our approach to social justice focuses on helping students develop the courage to be upstanders and the capacity to be civically engaged, empathetic, and compassionate citizens. Believing in the inherent value of all individuals, we stress the importance of adolescents finding value in themselves and in other people, regardless of difference. As students develop their own values and beliefs, they critically examine how present and historical institutions and norms perpetuate injustice and inequity in our society. Students are encouraged to identify issues and concerns that are meaningful to them, determine how they can work towards solutions, and implement actions to create positive change in their communities.

Middle-Level Social Justice Curricular Goals

Participates in classroom and school deliberation observing established protocols and taking an active role in critiquing and improving upon democratic processes.

Investigates the origins of institutional power, bias, and privilege.
Develops a positive self-concept and recognizes that each person's multiple identities interact to create a unique and complex individual.

Recognizes personal responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice, and injustice.

Speaks up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged.

Works effectively and respectfully with others who have different ideas or experiences.

Names and investigates problems arising from social, economic, and environmental inequities inside and outside of the school community and seek ways to address these problems.

Identifies strategies for individual and collective action and evaluates their effectiveness.

Speaks and acts with fairness, kindness, and compassion.

TCS Middle-Level Approach to Language Arts

Reading and writing for a variety of purposes and audiences is integral to our approach to Language Arts in the Middle Level. As readers, students encounter and engage with texts to obtain information and to expand their understanding of the world and their place in it. Of equal importance, students are provided time to read for enjoyment and to feed their own imaginations. All students at The Children's School are seen and celebrated as writers with powerful voices and stories to tell. In the Middle Level, creative writing serves as an important and popular vehicle for self-expression. Middle Level students also produce expository and persuasive writing for a variety of purposes. From research papers and stories to emails and newsletters, students engage in authentic opportunities for drafting, revising, and editing their writing to accomplish specific goals and outcomes.

Middle-Level English and Language Arts Curricular Goals

Reading

Uses reading to build an understanding of themselves, the cultures of the world, and the many dimensions of human experience; to acquire new information; and for personal fulfillment.

Applies a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate print and nonprint texts.

Identifies the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.

Cites textual evidence to support their understanding, analysis, and interpretation of a text.

Determines an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyzes how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Identifies themes in a work of literature and analyzes their relationship to characters, plot, setting, and other elements of literature.

Analyzes how an author's choice of words appeals to the senses, creates imagery, suggests mood, and sets tone.

Analyzes how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Compares and contrasts myths and traditional narratives from different cultures and geographic regions.

Demonstrates understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings, including distinguishing among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions).

Uses common Greek and Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Writing

Uses formal and informal writing as a way of engaging with the world, matching tone, organization, and style to task, purpose, and audience.

Writes narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using narrative techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection.

Writes informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Writes arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence, selecting and using an organizational scheme and style of communication appropriate to the audience and purpose.

Demonstrates command of the conventions of standard written English, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Demonstrates attention to the effects of sentence structure and word choice on meaning and tone.

Develops and strengthens writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach when working independently or with others to improve a piece of writing.

Develops and uses rhetorical, logical, and stylistic criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects before presenting them to varied audiences.

Speaking and Listening

Engages effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, using agreed-upon rules to pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information, observations, and ideas.

Makes oral presentations that demonstrate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.

Uses appropriate eye contact and posture, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation when addressing an audience.

Integrates multimedia and visual displays into presentations where appropriate to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Adapts speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of standard English when indicated or appropriate.

Demonstrates an understanding and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

Employs and is able to articulate active listening techniques.

- Adapted from the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework (2011)*.

TCS Middle-Level Approach to Digital Life Skills

Whether through social media, text messaging, or for academic and research purposes, digital technology is a ubiquitous part of the adolescent universe. This creates an array of learning opportunities and social challenges while representing an aspect of adolescent development markedly different than what was encountered in the past. Recognizing this, we approach digital life-skills as another aspect of the academic and social-emotional development of our students.

Middle-Level Digital Life Skills Curricular Goals

Builds and manages a healthy identity online and offline with integrity.

Manages screen time, multitasking, and engagement in online games and social media with self-control.

Detects situations of cyberbullying and develops strategies for handling them..

Protects data by creating strong passwords.

Handles with discretion all personal information shared online to protect their own and others' privacy.

Distinguishes between true and false information, good and harmful content, and trustworthy and questionable contacts online.

Understands the nature of digital footprints and their real-life consequences and manages them responsibly.

Shows empathy towards their own and others' needs and feelings online.

Demonstrates a foundational understanding of the theory, principles, and applications of binary logic.

*Adapted from "8 digital life skills all children need – and a plan for teaching them" by Yuhyun Park. *World Economic Forum* (2016).

Health Curriculum Framework

These topics will be discussed at a developmentally appropriate level in each classroom. For example, under “Food and Nutrition,” Kindergarteners might discuss noticing their bodies’ hunger cues and making healthy food choices, while 8th graders would cover nutrition but also discuss body image/disordered eating.

1. Safety/Disease Prevention
 - Hygiene
 - Accident prevention
 - First aid/CPR
 - Physical/Emotional Safety
 - Cyber Safety*

2. Wellness
 - Food and Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Sleep
 - Stress management
 - Substance abuse*

3. Human Sexuality
 - Body systems/body parts
 - Where do babies come from
 - Gender
 - Puberty changes*
 - Sexual relationships*

4. Relationships
 - Families
 - Peers—including peer pressure, bullying
 - Communication strategies
 - Self -esteem

*Denotes upper grade (5-8) topics.