

Program of Studies

Berkshire Country Day School

Middle School
2019-2020

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle-School homeroom teachers for grades 4–6 serve as advisors to a group of students in their respective grades. Advisors are advocates for their advisees and keep abreast of their advisees' progress throughout the school year by soliciting information from teachers at faculty meetings and from meeting with their advisees on a weekly basis.

Advisors also serve as the first line of contact between their advisees' parents and the school for a question or concern of a general nature. If the question pertains to a particular class, parents should contact the teacher of the course. If steps need to be taken to effect changes in the behavior of or academic support for an advisee, the advisor will set up a conference with parents, class teachers and/or the Associate Head of School to develop a plan of action.

The advisors meet frequently with their advisees as well as hold two dedicated advisory periods per week. These advisory blocks are used for the social curriculum. Positive personal and social growth is central to the BCD mission. Goal setting and self-reflection is an important part of our program.

Advisory block conversations include a variety of topics such as respect, responsibility, courage, value systems, decision-making, tolerance, excellence, success, manners, and service. These topics stem from the pillars of BCD's core values: Originality, Quality, Respect, Sustainability, Community, Wellness and Citizenship.

middle-school advisors

grade 4: Ms. Katharine Allentuck,

grade 5: Ms. Kristin Grippio

grade 6: Mr. Tim Gore, assisted by Ms, Jana Laiz

middle-school sports

The foundation of the after-school sports program is the belief that every student should have an opportunity to participate in organized team sports at BCD. Among the many things that can be learned from team sports are physical conditioning, sportsmanship, cooperation, social interaction, dependence on others, and the shared-experience factor. This last point is particularly important at a small school and is a major reason for having only one sport each season through the ninth grade. Perhaps the most compelling reason for having team sports is that the peak time for physical skill and coordination development in a person's life is from ten to thirteen years old. Being on a team provides a means for this development through the skill and time requirements. It also provides a reason to want to excel so that the individual may be an asset to the team. Another

reason to have team sports at the middle and upper-school levels is that this may be the only opportunity for a student to be on a team due to the far more competitive demands of high school and college sports.

At BCD, after-school sports are required for all students in grades 3 through 9 in the spring and fall. In the winter, there are numerous optional sports offerings for grades 3-9 as well as the Friday Ski Program which is open to students from PK to Grade 9. Occasionally, students may have particular interests beyond the scope of what BCD offers (such as tennis, riding, swimming, karate, etc.) and they may choose an alternate program in the fall and/ or spring as long as it meets certain criteria, i.e. meeting three times per week, providing active as opposed to passive activity, and supervised by a qualified instructor. The administration at BCD finds it particularly important for students in grades 7 through 9 to be involved in after-school sports, because no physical education classes are scheduled for these grades within the school day.

The most difficult problem with a required competitive sports program is striking a balance between participation and competition. Achieving a perfect blend of the two is virtually impossible even though this is what the program tries to accomplish. The reason is our belief that all children should have an opportunity to play team sports. While an intramural program would be sufficient for some, it does not provide the competitive edge or the format for teaching good sportsmanship for those who have the skills to play on a competitive team. So, BCD tries to create enough teams at varying levels in an effort to meet the needs of all of its students. The emphasis of the program for grades 4 and 5 (the "Farm Team") is on learning skills, and, consequently, level. In the Junior Varsity and Varsity programs, students participate on competitive teams that play teams from area schools. In both of these programs, the coaches try to balance participation and playing time. The question of balance between competition and participation is always a delicate one, but the fact is that everyone is on a team and everyone is involved.

grade 4

Ms. Katharine Allentuck,
advisor

English

Ms. Katharine Allentuck

The grade 4 English program includes the study of reading, writing, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, handwriting, oral expression, and the development of study skills. Our reading program is based upon literature chosen to stimulate a child's love of reading. Students read orally to reinforce word recognition and word attack skills as well as to develop fluency. Silent reading helps to strengthen comprehension skills and teaches students that reading can be a vehicle for gaining information as well as for personal enjoyment. Writing assignments are developed from literature, class discussions, and creative springboards. Students work with descriptive, narrative, expository, and poetic forms. Student compositions and poems are read aloud by the teacher or their authors so that the children will realize the importance of their writing. Word structures, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, as well as dictionary and thesaurus skills are covered to increase student understanding of word meanings and to improve writing skills. The study of phonics is reinforced through spelling lists. Grammar lessons, centering on the mechanics and structures of writing, are taught regularly. Spelling quizzes, vocabulary quizzes, comprehension assessments, group projects, and writing assignments are means of evaluating student progress. Participation in class discussion and completion of homework assignments help determine a student's effort grade, as well as the achievement grade.

social studies

Ms. Katharine Allentuck

The grade 4 social studies program begins with a study of world geography and mapping skills. The students apply these skills to an integrated study of the United States. This unit of study will culminate in a final project. Additionally, there is a yearlong creative mapping in which students design and create their own state. Then the focus will switch to our neighbor to the south, Mexico, where students will explore the ancient cultures of the Maya and the Aztec as well as the geography and culture of the area.

Students are taught from a variety of texts and primary sources, examples of visual art and music, maps, time lines and the news magazine Time for Kids. Students are encouraged to function independently, as well as in groups, as they examine facts and formulate ideas. Grades are based on quizzes, group and individual projects, and participation. Homework is given periodically throughout the year to complement that which is being done in class.

integrated studies

Ms. Katharine Allentuck

Throughout the course of the term, technology will be integrated into the study of humanities. In addition to weekly typing practice, the students will become familiar with a variety of Microsoft Office programs as well as internet research and copyright/ fair use. The students will also visit websites and learn applications and programs which will enable them to create work that compliments fourth-grade humanities material.

math

Ms. Katharine Allentuck

The main goal of the grade 4 math curriculum is to have students solidify their computational skills as they expand on their conceptual framework.

Students will use these skills to tackle problem-solving activities and to increase their ability to think mathematically. In addition to a review of basic skills, students will work on more complex multiplication and division algorithms, fraction concepts and operations, mathematical patterns, collecting, representing and interpreting data, decimal concepts, measurement and geometry, and problem solving. They will occasionally use calculators. Manipulative material will be available at all times to reinforce learning. Games are played to reinforce skills and to give students a feeling for probability and strategy. Additional projects and topics will be introduced as time and skill levels allow.

Assessments are both formal (tests, quizzes and projects) and informal (homework, class work, small group activities). Students will be involved in creating their own math portfolio to document progress in the fourth-grade course.

science

Mr. Tim Gore

Grade 4 science begins with physics in the context of simple machines. Levers, screws, pulleys, inclined planes, and gears will be investigated. The culmination will be a team project in which students will build and present a machine of their own design. They will regularly record the learning in lab notebooks. Through late fall, winter, and early spring, students will also be studying birds. As a class we are participating in Classroom Feeder watch, a program run by Cornell University. We will conclude in spring with the Voyage of the Mimi program, where the focus will be on whales, the ocean, and environmental issues. Through the various labs this year, the students will learn to write a basic lab report, observe and make predictions, draw conclusions, and make graphs from data collected during experiments. Evaluation is based on the successful completion of quizzes, unit tests, projects, homework, and positive engagement in class.

Spanish

Sr. Miguel Silva

Our goal is to help fourth-students to understand and speak Spanish language in a variety of simple contexts, to increase their comfort with the language, and then to read and write sentences using words and phrases with which they are already familiar. They will gain experience in asking simple questions and responding in the positive or negative. Topics include greetings, numbers, colors, the alphabet, the calendar and birthdays, classroom objects, food, members of the family, animals, and weather.

Active participation is encouraged. The students will speak, read, and write complete sentences using the book and workbook Vale. They will develop the ability to create their own sentences, at first using the Vale materials to support them and later using their imaginations to generate their own.

Activities will be extended to include additional games and interactive exercises, songs, stories, and cultural materials from Hispanic countries. Projects will include some drawing that is relevant to the subject they are studying. There will be many opportunities for the students to engage in simple conversation and to do prepared presentations, such as introducing themselves and their families, expressing some of their interests, or describing their artwork. Games, songs, and skits will be used to aid retention and increase fluency.

art

Ms. Sasha Sicurella

Berkshire Country Day School's Visual Arts program is an innovative and dynamic module that is rooted, both conceptually and structurally, in the practices and processes of the art studio. Located on the second floor of Furey Hall, a fully-equipped ceramics studio, a drawing and painting studio, and a mixed media studio function as laboratories for cumulative learning of specific art disciplines. To enhance depth of knowledge, students spend one trimester in each studio and participate in art-making workshops twice per week. Studios are led by teaching artists who are committed to investigative learning and critical thinking with a focus on understanding the importance of both process and aesthetic value. Connecting with the outside environment in the form of visits to museums, artists' studios, galleries, and other venues provides context, community involvement, and alternative perspectives. Cohesion among the studio practices is established through a Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) model; a conceptual framework that enables rigorous study of the visual arts as an integral part of each student's general education.

DBAE means that students study art and art-making from the following four discipline perspectives:

- production: creating or performing
- history: encountering the historical and cultural background of works of art
- aesthetics: discovering the nature and philosophy of art

- criticism: making informed judgments about art

The fourth-grade curriculum introduces the formal elements of art and creative practice: line, shape, form, space, texture, value, and color. Flexible goals and benchmarks allow for individual choice, ongoing collaborations, and experimentation. Students learn to become active viewers and critical thinkers by talking about their work and asking informed questions in a positive group setting. Larger themes of the curriculum include identity, scale, storytelling, and memory.

- *mixed-media studio* (one trimester): A variety of traditional and non-traditional materials are used to explore sculpture, installation, assemblage, collage, and fiber-based art. The intersection of different art forms is encouraged through movement, performance, and music. Students work on both individual and collaborative projects that use contemporary art, artists, and ideas as inspiration.
- *drawing & painting* (one trimester): Students engage in both large-scale, collaborative work and individual using a variety of two-dimensional tools and techniques including graphite, charcoal, ink, watercolors, tempera and acrylic paint, natural pigments, and mixed papers. Stand-up easels, large floor spaces, and drawing benches allow for choice and help to create a comprehensive working environment.
- *ceramics* (one trimester): Focus on hand-building techniques, slab work, and understanding the properties of clay. Projects make reference to ancient history and the origins of ceramic art and craft. Students build upon their skills with hand tools and begin to learn about pigments, minerals, and glazes.

music and chorus

Ms. Natalia Bernal & Mr. Jon Suters

The fourth grade music program will include traditional children's songs and rhymes, classical music pieces, folktales, and selections from children's literature. The lessons will enrich your child's musical experiences, and they will also enhance his/her literacy and learning.

The core of each lesson will be thematically based: some seasonal, some on literature, and some based on the social studies and science themes your child is studying. Other lessons will be based on folktales, dances, and songs from around the world. One example of a fourth grade theme may be "The Sweetest Song", a mini-opera accompanied by Orff instruments and based on an African-American folktale. An example would be learning the African song and dance "Funga Alafia", which requires the children to improvise on large African-style drums, accompanied by an Orff ensemble. Recorder study will continue in fourth grade as the children add more notes to their repertoire. The study of musical form, rhythm, melody, and timbre will all be

expanded during this year as children begin to compose their own music in small groups.

Once weekly, students in grades 4-6 participate choose between band and chorus. The focus is on building community as well as preparation for concerts and performances. In chorus, emphasis is placed on proper breathing and vocal techniques as students sing a wide variety of repertoire. Students will be singing in unison, canon and two-part harmony. In band, students ideally bring the instrument they have been learning and practicing outside of school, but there is also the opportunity for beginners to try band. Band and chorus work both in isolation and at times collaboration.

physical education

Mr. Jordan Storti

The physical education program in the Middle School becomes more challenging for the students. We expect the children to work harder and spend a greater length of time working on the skills involved in the specific sport we are learning. We offer a variety of lifetime and team sports throughout the three years that the children are in the Middle School.

In the fall and spring, we administer a physical fitness test to determine if each child is within the average range of overall fitness. The test covers abdominal strength, upper body strength, flexibility and aerobic capacity. Competition does exist, but playing for fun where you can strive for a personal goal and focus on displaying a skill is more important. We emphasize cooperation, respect for each other, showing enthusiasm, and learning to compromise with each other. Good sportsmanship is a valuable tool to possess in and out of the classroom.

Please make sure your child has extra sneakers for Fitzpatrick Hall. We will send a written notification after three times without appropriate footwear.

grade 5

English

Ms. Kristin Grippo

Grade 5 English is a continuation and expansion of skills, themes, and concepts that were introduced in fourth grade English. In fifth grade, the students will continue to work on the writing process of taking an original, or seed idea, and developing it through careful editing to a final project. Editing will be done in conferences with a teacher, with peers, and alone. Topics may include personal narrative, poetry, myths, persuasive pieces, short stories, mysteries, and book projects. Students will write both creative and expository pieces, which will be gathered into an anthology at the end of the year. In addition, students will present finished pieces to an audience which will help to develop public speaking skills.

The spelling/vocabulary program is based on Latin roots and words from the curriculum. Grammar and mechanics are taught regularly using a variety of sources.

A variety of texts will be read and discussed that will introduce many themes, including peer and family relationships, coming of age stories, mystery, and myth. The history course in Grade 5 complements this English course. As students learn about ancient civilizations, such as the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and the people of China and India, they will read tales and legends of these cultures.

history

Ms. Kristin Grippo

The ancient history program in fifth grade is designed to instill in the students an appreciation of and interest in peoples of the past. The children spend the year learning about major ancient civilizations: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, and India. In addition, other civilizations studied include Phoenicians, Hebrews, Minoans and Mycenaeans as well as ancient civilizations in Africa and the Americas. In each case, the focus is on how these ancient people met the challenges of establishing and maintaining a civilized society and how they contributed to our civilization today. Having learned that “a culture is a people’s whole way of life,” the children examine the geography, class structure, government, economy, diet, clothing, housing, educational system, arts, and religion of each society, and thus they are introduced to many disciplines within the area of social studies. Archaeology is emphasized, and the children soon understand that by studying artifacts, paintings, and sculpture, they can assess a people’s technological level of advancement and cultural identity.

Skills which are continually practiced are: reading for content, labeling and reading maps, reading charts, copying notes from the board, taking notes from a text, participating in class discussions, listening to others, and assessing the relative importance of items in a list. Students will also learn research skills and synthesis. They

will learn to use educational internet sites to augment their knowledge. As the year progresses, the interaction between human beings and their environment, the relationship between cause and effect, and the comparing and contrasting of cultures are emphasized as pivotal concepts.

During each unit of the course, the children work on different projects both in and out of class. These allow students to visualize and participate more fully in the lives of the people of ancient times, and to have the opportunity to learn about the ancient world in a visual and kinesthetic way. Some projects are done individually, others within small groups to provide a collaborative learning experience.

Homework, short papers, tests, quizzes, and projects are all used to reinforce the material presented in class and in the readings. Students will develop research skills throughout the year and will write brief research papers on several units.

math

Ms. Kristin Grippo

When we teach math to students in fifth grade, we try to capitalize on their natural curiosity, enthusiasm, and energy to reinforce skills and foster a positive attitude toward mathematics. We also work with the students to create the foundation for solid study habits.

This is the year when we try to solidify whole number operations, and then move to operations with fractions and decimals. Students also work with geometry, measurement, and number theory. Percents are introduced along with some ideas that lead eventually to algebra. We use problem solving throughout the program. Manipulative materials are used to develop an understanding of abstract concepts. We work with calculators occasionally so that students can gain a realistic understanding of their uses and limitations. Enrichment and the extension of topics under consideration are made available to everyone, in order to give all students a chance to experience the possibilities.

We use a combination of textbook activities, work sheets, games, puzzles and manipulative materials as appropriate. Homework is given on average four nights a week, and tests and quizzes are given to help assess progress and to make students more comfortable with regular assessment.

science

Mr. Tim Gore

The grade 5 science curriculum follows a more structured path than that of Lower School or grade 4. The theme for the year is Life Science. Students begin the fall by exploring the topic of cells. They use microscopes, learn vocabulary, and experiment with diffusion. Other major topics for the year include: the digestive, circulatory, and respiratory systems; plant growth and structure; long-term plant experiments; and

stream life. The spring trimester includes a study of human development that focuses on the reproductive system and puberty. Classroom activities include lectures, notes, research, experiments, hands-on exploration, and study games. Learning by doing is stressed. Depending on the activity, students work individually, in small groups, or as a class. Evaluation is based on successful completion of homework, quizzes, tests, reports/projects, and notebooks, as well as positive engagement in class.

French

Mme. Deanna Collins

The goal in fifth-grade French class is to help students develop the confidence and ability to understand and speak basic spoken French with an authentic French accent. Classes are conducted primarily in French by having students recite, sing and learn in French-immersion style instruction. Grammar and vocabulary are presented in a variety of ways designed to elicit the students' active participation. Techniques include: reading and listening to stories, singing songs, playing games, performing short skits, as well as drawing and cooking. The introduction of fundamental grammar continues with the goal of learning to refine reading and writing in French. Learning to spell correctly is also stressed by teaching the phonetic system in French. Students spend the year creating their own French cahier which contains all the important work from the academic year. The cahier is also a useful organizational tool because it unifies the material covered in class. One important theme of the year is the study of the ancient cave drawings in France. Students learn the story of how the caves at Lascaux and Chauvet were discovered, and after learning about how the cave-dwellers lived, they make their own "cave drawings" that are displayed in the classroom. Grades are based on classroom participation and work in our French notebooks, homework, quizzes, listening and speaking assessments and longer projects.

Spanish

Sr. Miguel Silva

Our goal is to help children become increasingly comfortable hearing, speaking, reading and writing Spanish, and to become familiar with some of the cultural traditions in Hispanic countries. A variety of expressions and vocabulary will be introduced so that the students can understand and learn to independently generate their own conversations. Topics covered will include greetings, calendar, seasons, clothing, animals, numbers, and food.

Classes will be conducted primarily in Spanish. The classroom will be a place where lively oral activities give students a chance to generate language as much as possible. Songs, games, poems, role-play, skits, and Realia will be used to put the language into a fun and challenging context for learning. Through repeated and consistent use of common phrases and classroom routines in Spanish, students will begin to gain an intuitive sense of grammatical structures. Oral proficiency is the ultimate goal; writing

and reading are used to support that goal. The cultivation of a good Spanish accent and exposure to Hispanic culture will be integrated into our lessons.

art

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The fifth-grade curriculum expands upon the formal elements of art and creative practice: line, shape, form, space, texture, value, and color. Flexible goals and benchmarks allow for individual choice, ongoing collaborations, and experimentation. Students learn to become active viewers and critical thinkers by talking about their work and asking informed questions in a positive group setting. Larger themes of the curriculum include identity, scale, storytelling, and memory.

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physical education

Mr. Jordan Storti

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grade 6

**Mr. Tim Gore, advisor,
assisted by Ms. Jana Laiz**

English

Ms. Jana Laiz

The grade 6 English curriculum includes literature and activities that continue to develop skills of comprehension and self-expression. The sixth-grade year is critical to the awakening of interpretative skills, the emergence of symbolic thinking, and growing awareness of social order and moral structure. The selection of assigned readings charts a course from pure imagination—by way of fantasy, myth, fairy tale, and fable—into the real-world narratives of historical fiction and contemporary realistic fiction. It then moves forward into dystopian literature. Along the way, we will consider the joys and challenges of coming of age in the real world and will reflect upon the ways in which society addresses issues, such as prejudice, conflict, justice, and morality. Class discussion, short compositions, and critical analysis are among the techniques employed to approach these topics. Sixth-grade English also emphasizes the importance of habitual reading and writing by way of workshops and independent reading and writing time. In addition, students are exposed to a variety of literary elements, such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, foreshadowing, and personification. Work in grammar, spelling, and vocabulary skills is carried on throughout the year.

geography

Mr. Tim Gore

Grade 6 geography is a survey course. As sixth graders study the world outside of North America, they will begin to understand the larger environment of people, places, and events in a global context. The students will study the world within the context of the five themes of geography: location, place, movement, region, and human-environment interaction.

Sixth-grade geography focuses on elements of culture by studying societies across the globe. We think about what makes us different, what makes us similar, and how we change.

Materials used in this course include a traditional textbook, authentic literature, and various other resources developed by The Peace Corps and World Wise Schools. Using these various resources will help students understand components of their own culture and lead them to appreciate and understand differences between their culture and that of others. Students will also use various publications to participate in research and discussion about current events and topics.

mathematics

Ms. Kathy Shortelle

Because this is the final year of the regular, non-algebra mathematics sequence for BCD students, it is imperative that they achieve mastery of the four basic operations—addition, subtraction, multiplication and division—as applied to whole numbers, fractions, and decimals. Students work in smaller, developmentally-appropriate groups using mental arithmetic, games, class projects, and word problems that provide a meaningful and pleasant environment for this mastery, thus laying the final foundation for future progress in algebra and beyond. Along with a main math curriculum, we supplement our work with various challenges and enrichment activities.

earth science and astronomy

Mr. Tim Gore

The science themes for grade 6 are earth science and astronomy. Students spend the fall exploring the topics of the universe, radiation, galaxies, stars, and the sun. Other major topics for the year include: the solar system, the moon, the Apollo missions, model rocketry, and the earth itself. Students complete numerous small group and individual projects throughout the year, culminating with the Grade 6 Robotics Fair in the spring. The year ends with a four-week robotics unit using *Lego Mindstorms*. Classroom activities include lectures, notes, research, experiments, hands-on exploration, and study games. Learning by doing is stressed. Depending on the activity, students work individually, in small groups, or as a class. Evaluation is based on successful completion of homework, quizzes, tests, reports/projects, and notebooks, as well as positive engagement in class.

French

Mme. Deanna Collins

Our goal is to help students develop the confidence and ability to understand and express themselves in a variety of everyday subjects in French. Basic French grammar will be formally introduced, as well as reading and writing. Oral proficiency is the primary focus. Students will learn about France and the Francophone world, their culture and traditions.

Classes will be conducted primarily in French. Topics will be presented in a variety of ways designed to elicit the student's active participation. Techniques include communicative exercises, songs, games, skits, writing and reading. The program will be supported by a text with accompanying workbook, audio and video CD's. Grades are based on classroom participation, homework, projects, tests and quizzes both written and oral.

Spanish

Sr. Miguel Silva

Our goal is to help students develop the confidence and ability to understand and express themselves in a variety of everyday subjects in Spanish. Basic Spanish grammar, reading, and writing will be formally introduced. Oral proficiency is the primary focus. Students will learn about the Hispanic world, culture, and traditions. Classes will be conducted primarily in Spanish. Topics will be presented in a variety of ways designed to elicit active student participation. Techniques include communicative exercises, songs, games, skits, writing, and reading. The program will be supported by a text with accompanying workbook, and multi-media ancillaries. Grades are based on classroom participation, homework, and both written and oral tests and quizzes.

Latin

Ms. Eugénie Fawcett

The primary goal of the Latin Department is to enable students to read Latin prose and to translate it into coherent English. Other goals of the Latin Department are: (1) to promote verbal precision, logical thought, and simple grammatical and etymological analysis, and (2) to foster an understanding of and appreciation for the Greco-Roman influence in Western literature, philosophy, and art.

The Grade 6 Latin curriculum introduces students to basic Latin vocabulary and English/Latin grammar as well as to Roman culture. Every student will be expected to complete a short homework assignment before each class and bring his/her copy of the text/workbook to class.

physical education

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- criticism: making informed judgments about art

The fifth-grade curriculum expands upon the formal elements of art and creative practice: line, shape, form, space, texture, value, and color. Flexible goals and benchmarks allow for individual choice, ongoing collaborations, and experimentation. Students learn to become active viewers and critical thinkers by talking about their work and asking informed questions in a positive group setting. Larger themes of the curriculum include identity, scale, storytelling, and memory.

- *mixed-media studio* (one trimester): A variety of traditional and non-traditional materials are used to explore sculpture, installation, assemblage, collage, and fiber-based art. The intersection of different art forms is encouraged through movement, performance, and music. Students work on both individual and collaborative projects that use contemporary art, artists, and ideas as inspiration.
- *drawing & painting* (one trimester): Students engage in both large-scale, collaborative work and individual using a variety of two-dimensional tools and techniques including graphite, charcoal, ink, watercolors, tempera and acrylic

paint, natural pigments, and mixed papers. Stand-up easels, large floor spaces, and drawing benches allow for choice and help to create a comprehensive working environment.

- *ceramics* (one trimester): Focus on hand-building techniques, slab work, and understanding the properties of clay. Projects make reference to ancient history and the origins of ceramic art and craft. Students build upon their skills with hand tools and begin to learn about pigments, minerals, and glazes.

music and chorus

Ms. Natalia Bernal & Ms. Jon Suters

The 6th grade music program will include traditional children's songs and rhymes, classical music pieces, folktales, and selections from children's literature. The lessons will enrich your child's musical experiences, and they will also enhance his/her literacy and learning.

The core of each lesson will be thematically based: some seasonal, some on literature, and some based on the social studies and science themes your child is studying. Other lessons will be based on folktales, dances, and songs from around the world. One example of a fourth grade theme may be "The Sweetest Song", a mini-opera accompanied by Orff instruments and based on an African-American folktale. An example would be learning the African song and dance "Funga Alafia", which requires the children to improvise on large African-style drums, accompanied by an Orff ensemble. Recorder study will continue in fourth grade as the children add more notes to their repertoire. The study of musical form, rhythm, melody, and timbre will all be expanded during this year as children begin to compose their own music in small groups.

Once weekly, students in grades 4-6 participate choose between band and chorus. The focus is on building community as well as preparation for concerts and performances. In chorus, emphasis is placed on proper breathing and vocal techniques as students sing a wide variety of repertoire. Students will be singing in unison, canon and two-part harmony. In band, students ideally bring the instrument they have been learning and practicing outside of school, but there is also the opportunity for beginners to try band. Band and chorus work both in isolation and at times collaboration.