

Piscataway Township Middle Schools

Elective Classes

Course Descriptions

Full Year Courses

Instrumental Music

Band (Grade 6)

Prerequisite (Experience): Fourth or Fifth Grade Band is recommended but not required

Sixth Grade Band is a performance-based ensemble that is available only for students in the sixth grade. The ensemble rehearses every other day while meeting once a week by instrument for group lessons for the full school year. Students will gain a fundamental command of not only one's primary instrument, but students will build the skill of listening inside an ensemble with music that is challenging, yet rewarding. Each individual grade is based on performance in class, lesson attendance, and performance at each concert (at least two per year). This course is for students who play a woodwind, brass, or percussion instruments. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Band (Grade 7)

Prerequisite (Experience): Sixth Grade Band

Seventh Grade Band is a performance-based ensemble that is available for students in seventh grade who have played in sixth grade band or who have previous band experience. Our goal is to build on the foundation of musical knowledge that was built in sixth grade. Seventh Grade Band starts to explore additional scales and experiments with expanding the range of each instrument. The Seventh Grade Band combines with the Eighth Grade Band to explore a challenging and exciting musical repertoire. There will be two performances in evening concerts during the school year with additional performances in and out of school, rounding out the schedule. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Band (Grade 8)

Prerequisite (Experience): Seventh Grade Band

Eighth Grade Band is a performance-based ensemble that is available for students that were previously in the Seventh Grade Band. The focus in Eighth Grade Band is to fine-tune concepts that are learned in previous years in preparation for participation in high school level ensembles. There is a much broader focus on learning scales and playing in different styles, as well as an emphasis on musical phrasing and fine detailing. Additionally, there is a focus on sight-reading in order to nurture the ability to read music consistently at a high level. Students interested in the PHS Academies will have an opportunity to build their audition repertoire and scale knowledge in this course in preparation for their audition. There will be two performances in evening concerts during the school year with additional performances in and out of school, rounding out the schedule. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Jazz Band (Grade 8 Only)

Prerequisite (Experience): Seventh Grade Band or Orchestra - This is taken simultaneously with the other ensemble (band/orchestra)

Eighth Grade Jazz Band is only for students in eighth grade that have been recommended by either the band teacher or the orchestra teacher. The performance-based ensemble meets in addition to Band during the school day and focuses on playing varying styles of jazz (i.e. Blues, Swing, Ballads, Funk). The ensemble requires learning of the Blues scales and a unit on learning how to improvise a short solo. There will be at least two performances in evening concerts during the school year with additional performances in and out of school.

Orchestra (Grade 6)

Prerequisite (Experience): Fourth or Fifth Grade Orchestra is recommended but not required

This course is for students who play a string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass). Students will work to develop performance skills, musicianship, and music literacy as they prepare repertoire for at least two evening performances each year. In sixth grade, there is a focus on technique and music literacy in order to build the foundation that students need for success in the string program. Students will also participate in a group lesson once per week as part of this ensemble. There will be additional opportunities for students to expand and enrich their musical knowledge both in and out of school. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Orchestra (Grade 7)

Prerequisite (Experience): Sixth Grade Orchestra (or comparable experience)

This course is for students who play a string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass). Students will work to develop performance skills, musicianship, and music literacy as they prepare repertoire for at least two evening performances each year. In seventh grade, there is a focus on sight-reading and musicianship in order to build on the foundation that began in sixth grade. Students will also participate in a group lesson once per week as part of this ensemble. There will be additional opportunities for students to expand and enrich their musical knowledge both in and out of school. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Orchestra (Grade 8)

Prerequisite (Experience): Seventh Grade Orchestra (or comparable experience)

This course is for students who play a string instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass). Students will work to develop performance skills, musicianship, and music literacy as they prepare repertoire for at least two evening performances each year. In eighth grade, there is a focus on advanced techniques, scale building, and advanced literacy in order to prepare students for success in the string program at the high school level. Students interested in the PHS Academies will have an opportunity to build their audition repertoire and scale knowledge in this course in preparation for their audition. Students will also participate in a group lesson once per week as part of this ensemble. There will be additional opportunities for students to expand and enrich their musical knowledge both in and out of school. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Vocal Music

Choir (Grade 6)

Prerequisite (Experience): Fourth or Fifth Grade Choir (Chorus) is recommended but not required

This course is for students who want to sing as part of a vocal ensemble. Students will work to develop performance skills, musicianship, and music literacy as they prepare a repertoire for at least two evening performances each year. Students will work to develop skills in harmonic performance and sight-reading as they engage in a team-oriented musical environment. There is a special focus on building the foundations of good vocal technique and basic music literacy. **This class meets every other day for a full year.** As schedule permits, there may be opportunities for small-group lessons.

Choir (Grade 7)

Prerequisite (Experience): Sixth Grade Choir (or comparable experience)

This course is for students who want to sing as part of a vocal ensemble. Students will continue to build on the foundation that was laid in Sixth Grade Choir with continued exploration of sight-reading, key signatures, rhythmic reading, and harmonic structure. Students will collaborate in creative assignments and projects in addition to rehearsing and developing their concert and performance repertoire. There is a special focus on building the foundations of sight-singing. **This class meets every other day for a full year.** As schedule permits, there may be opportunities for small-group lessons.

Choir (Grade 8)

Prerequisite (Experience): Seventh Grade Choir (or comparable experience)

This course is for students who want to sing as part of a vocal ensemble. Students will continue to build on the skills they have developed as part of Sixth and Seventh Grade Choir with continued exploration of musical expression, blend, tuning, and conducting. Students will collaborate creatively in projects, assignments, and improvisations in addition to rehearsing and developing their concert and performance repertoire. There is a special focus on the voice change and vocal development, in addition to rounding out each student's music literacy and sight-singing toolbox. Students interested in the PHS Academies will have an opportunity to build their audition repertoire and sight-reading skills in this course in preparation for their audition. **This class meets every other day for a full year.** As schedule permits, there may be opportunities for small-group lessons, chamber ensembles, or a cappella ensembles.

World Language

Pathways Spanish (Grade 7)

This fun, interactive course for middle school students is filled with diverse, multimedia language activities. Students begin their introduction to Spanish by focusing on the four key areas of World Language study: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each unit consists of a new vocabulary theme and grammar concepts, reading and listening comprehension activities, speaking and writing activities, and cultural presentations. Students should expect to be actively engaged in simple conversations and respond appropriately to basic conversational prompts in Spanish, analyze and compare cultural practices, and perspectives of Spanish-speaking countries. **This course meets every other day for a full year.**

Pathways Spanish (Grade 8)

Prerequisite (Experience): Pathways Spanish (Grade 7)

Students continue their language-learning adventure by progressing to the next level of middle school Spanish. Throughout the course students focus on the four key areas of foreign language study: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each unit consists of a new vocabulary theme and grammar concepts, reading and listening comprehension activities, speaking and writing activities and cultural presentations. Students should expect to be actively engaged in complex conversation and respond appropriately to conversational prompts, analyze and compare cultural practices, products, and perspectives of various Spanish speaking countries. **This class meets every other day for a full year.**

Semester (Half-Year) Courses

Visual Art

Art (Grade 6)

Sixth Grade Art is a sampling of materials and ideas: “a kaleidoscope of art.” Students will construct their own sketchbooks and use them to sketch and form their rough drafts. Students will learn to draw a variety of objects and still life, using contour line and sketching techniques. Students will use their imaginations and explore what makes them unique. Students will work with clay and learn to hand form shapes, make attachments, and create texture. Students will dabble in digital art and various drawing and editing apps. Students will learn printmaking techniques, explore watercolors, tempera paints, and collage. Students will have opportunities to display their artwork throughout the school year as well as seek additional artistic opportunities in and out of school. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Art (Grade 7)

Seventh Grade Art is a cornucopia of projects and ideas. The course will focus on color, shape, form, positive/negative space and self-expression. Students will keep a sketchbook to catalog their ideas, rough drafts, and sketches. Through painting, students will learn color mixing, blending, and ombres. With clay, students will create vessels (something that holds something else) and refine their hand-building techniques, attachment techniques, and glazing ability. Through printmaking, students will expand their understanding of design and positive/negative space. Through collage, students will learn to cut and create directly with paper (without drawing) and pay homage to Henry Matisse. Students will hone and refine their use of the techniques and materials learned from sixth grade, however students new to art will also be able to advance quickly in this course. Students will have opportunities to display their artwork throughout the school year as well as seek additional artistic opportunities in and out of school. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Art (Grade 8)

Eighth Grade Art is a place to refine your artistic self and focus on self-expression and self-awareness through a variety of materials and techniques. Students will keep a sketchbook throughout the course. For those interested in the high school academies, this class will be a place to prepare your portfolio. Students will work with clay and learn hand-forming techniques and refine their glazing abilities. Students will continue to use iPad apps and also explore photography. Students will participate in assignments that incorporate sculpture, painting, and writing. There is also a drawing component and students will have some choice in their assignments. Students will hone and expand their skills in this course for focused art students. Students will have opportunities to display their artwork throughout the school year, as well as seek additional artistic opportunities in and out of school. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Engineering

Middle school engineering uses the Project Lead the Way's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curriculum. Engineering classes offered in grades six through eight will prepare students for high school and college STEM classes. The engineering classes are designed to create a dynamic hands-on experience. While exploring the vast fields of engineering and STEM, students will design and build their projects.

Engineering (Grade 6)

Students will explore the design process by building a skimmer. Students will launch their skimmer to test and then modify their skimmers for speed, distance, and overall performance. This project-based class gives the students the opportunity to be scientists and engineers creating in the field. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Engineering (Grade 7)

In this semester, students will discover the design process in greater depth. Engineering is a mix of art and science. Both of these disciplines will be used to create a playground for an elementary school. The playground will have a detailed theme that will engage children as well as adults. As students create their scale model, they will explore Computer Aided Design (CAD) and 3D printing. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Engineering (Grade 8)

The world of robotics will be discovered. Eighth grade students will be researching robots used in STEM fields. Students will determine the differences between robotics, artificial intelligence, and automation. Once an understanding of robotics is established, students will then build and code a robot to complete multiple tasks. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Media Technology

Media Technology (Grades 6, 7, and 8)

The purpose of the Media/Technology course is to prepare students for success in a digital world and global society. During this course, students will engage in a variety of activities while completing problem-based projects that include the use of applications such as word processing, spreadsheets (Excel/Numbers), multimedia software (PowerPoint/Keynote and/or iMovie), online collaboration with other students in the school district, and internet research. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Music

In this course, students will work to develop skills in music literacy, performance, composition, history, and critique. Students will perform on classroom instruments, use music technology, and collaborative teamwork to create performances, compositions, and improvise. Students will develop their musical vocabulary and repertoire through hands-on activities that incorporate creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork. Students will have opportunity to make connections to their learning through personal experience, reflection, critique, and collaboration.

Music (Grade 6)

In addition to music literacy, composition, and performance, sixth grade students will explore the composers and time periods of music history. Students will study the famous works, personal lives, and compositional techniques of these composers. Additionally students will make connections between the music of the past and their own musical interests, acknowledging how music evolves with changing societies, times, and technology.

This class meets every other day for a semester.

Music (Grade 7)

In addition to music literacy, composition, and performance, seventh grade students will explore music from a diverse selection of countries, cultures, and traditions. Students will explore the compositional, improvisational, and performance styles of these countries through hands-on performance, listening, and experiences. Students will draw connections and reflect on the material they explore with opportunities for student-led learning. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

Music (Grade 8)

In addition to music literacy, composition, and performance, eighth grade students will explore the genre of Jazz Music, with special focus on history, performance technique, and the blues progression. Students will discuss the development of Jazz and how this genre of music has influenced modern styles of music. Students will explore the lives, careers, and music of famous Jazz musicians tying their lives to their work. Finally, students will learn to play a blues progression and the compositional style of adding blues lyrics. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**

World Language

Spanish (Grades 6, 7, 8) **ALL 6TH GRADE STUDENTS WILL BE ASSIGNED THIS SPANISH

This fun, interactive course for middle school students is filled with diverse, multimedia language activities. Students begin their introduction to Spanish by focusing on the four key areas of World Language study: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each unit consists of a new vocabulary theme and grammar concepts, reading and listening comprehension activities, speaking and writing activities, and cultural presentations. Students should expect to be actively engaged in simple conversations and respond appropriately to basic conversational prompts in Spanish, analyze and compare cultural practices, and perspectives of Spanish-speaking countries. Students in each grade level will build upon their previous knowledge and expand their Spanish-speaking capacity. **This class meets every other day for a semester.**