

Program of Studies

Berkshire Country Day School

Where you belong.

Middle School
2009–10

Advisory Program

Middle and Upper School Homeroom Teachers in Grades 4–9 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 monthly 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 advisor lunches twice a month. The small-group advisory lunches are used as forums for human development topics and as a means to develop the character of our students. Positive personal and social growth is central to the BCD mission. Goal setting and self-reflection is an important part of our program. Advisee lunch conversations include a variety of topics such as respect, responsibility, courage, value systems, decision-making, tolerance, excellence, success, manners, and service.

Advisors

Grade 4

Sarah Pitcher-Hoffman, Jeff Uhas

Grade 5

Marilyn Cromwell, Rachel Siegel

Grade 6

Tim Gore, Gail Heady

Grade 7

Kate Meyer, Geoff Ashworth

Grade 8

Geoff perkins, Maria Whalen

Grade 9

John Dreger, Jesse Howard

Homework Expectations and Routines

Grades 4–6

Homework is assigned so that students develop important study habits, practice critical learning skills, memorize important information and pursue knowledge. It is our goal to develop independent learners who take the initiative with tasks, work responsibly, and enjoy a sense of accomplishment.

Homework is assigned on a regular basis and follows a published homework schedule that limits the number of classes that can assign homework on a given evening. Students in Grade 4 should have approximately one hour of homework a day. By Grade 6, students should have approximately one-and-a-half hours of homework a day. It is difficult to estimate the maximum amount of time a child will need to spend on homework since children work at such varying rates and make different choices about how to accomplish their homework tasks.

Teachers are available for help or to answer children's questions almost every school day during recess and/or during morning homeroom time. Teachers may be available at home in the evening until 8:30 p.m. to answer a telephone call.

These guidelines have been written to benefit you and your child. All children learn in different ways; you will need to tailor these suggestions to meet your child's and your needs. Some children need more guidance than others. You will know if you have established an appropriate homework routine if your child is taking steps forward bit by bit toward being an independent learner. Keep in mind that the first month of any school year can be stressful on families while children try to understand their teachers' expectations and work their way out of summer sleeping patterns, carefree existences, and rusty skills and back into school routines, working mind sets and well-oiled academic skills. If after this normal settling-in period, your child is spending an inordinate amount of time on homework, you should set up a conference with the student's advisor or with a particular subject area teacher if just one class seems to be creating an issue.

Parent Involvement

- Your focus should be to help your child with her/his homework not to do the work. Think of yourself as a coach or a cheerleader.
- Set a family expectation regarding homework. Let your child know that completing homework is her/his job. Decide together when and where homework should be done, and make this schedule as routine as possible. Consistency and predictability are keys to homework success.
- BCD students lead busy lives juggling academics, sports, and a variety of extra-curricular activities such as religious school, ballet, music, horse-back riding etc. It is important to find a healthy balance so that your child can enjoy every pursuit in which she/he is involved. As school should be the priority, other endeavors must be carefully managed to avoid conflicts with this objective.
- Try to remain within earshot of your child during homework time and check in with her/him from time to time. In order to show your interest in your child's academic life and work, ask supportive questions such as: "What are your projects for tonight?" "How long do you think your work will take?" "What part of Macbeth are you reading now?" "Are you still learning about gravity?" Help with directions and getting supplies together if this is needed. Brainstorm together or listen while your child develops her/his ideas for a writing assignment. Quiz your child on tasks that require memory and model the use of mnemonic (memory) devices. Check in to see that homework is completed. Even if you do not scrutinize each aspect of the work, you will know that the assignments have been neatly and carefully done, include your child's name and date, and have been placed in the proper binder to be handed in the next day etc.
- Work with your child to create a homework and activity schedule at the beginning of each week. As your child progresses through the grades, you will see that more long-range projects, more comprehensive tests, longer and more conceptual written assignments, and more research work are assigned and that this kind of work requires greater organization and more planning ahead. The family's weekend and evening schedule and your child's homework schedule will need to be coordinated. You and your child will need to have weekly conversations to plan for these projects if the work is to be accomplished in a timely manner and in a tranquil setting.
- Make clear to your child your expectations regarding her/his follow through with homework obligations. If your child has a history of falling short of your goal, think ahead about the kinds of consequences that you will be able to enforce given the lifestyle you lead.
- Since the ultimate goal of homework is to produce an independent learner, be sure that you are helping with but not doing her/his work. If your child has serious difficulty with an assignment or assignments, write a note or call the teacher to explain this. Work done by a parent does not give the teacher an accurate assessment of your child's understanding and mastery of skills and concepts, and this is crucial to your child getting the correct and necessary support.

These guidelines have been written to benefit you and your child. All children learn in different ways; you will need to tailor these suggestions to meet your child's and your needs. Some children need more guidance than others. You will know if you have established an appropriate homework routine if your child is taking steps forward bit by bit toward being an independent learner. Keep in mind that the first month of any school year can be stressful on families while children try to understand their teachers' expectations and work their way out of summer sleeping patterns, carefree existences, and rusty skills and back into school routines, working mind sets, and well-oiled academic skills. If after this normal settling-in period, your child is spending an inordinate amount of time on homework, you should set up a conference with the student's advisor or with a particular subject area teacher if just one class seems to be creating an issue.

Grade 4

Art

Marilyn Cromwell

Art is an integral part of a BCD education. All students have art classes twice a week. Visual language, a powerful tool for communication and expression, is taught. Over the years, students have an opportunity to create artwork in a studio setting, to learn principles of art and to learn to reflect on artwork. The emphasis is on making art, with art history being taught peripherally through the study of individual artists, movements in art, slides and videos, and reproductions. Art is also an avenue to learn to appreciate and respect the richness of other cultures. I work with other teachers to coordinate art projects with student studies. Knowing about the time period and manipulating relevant materials enhances both experiences. I incorporate other arts into some assignments in order to tap into areas where every student is comfortable.

The art room does offer a change for students from other academic subjects. First, it is a large, messy space. Let your child know if you want him/her to use a smock, or send them to school in casual clothes on art days. More importantly, in art, there are as many right answers as there are children. There is the opportunity for individual growth through invention and exploration. Art encourages divergent thinking. I hope to foster students' ability to seek solutions to the problems the assignments set for them through their own reflection, to learn to value multiple responses, and to provide the setting for creative thinking to occur. These are all skills that our increasingly global, complex world will require of them. There is flexibility both in the projects I present and in the time the student has to complete them. The Art Department offers a variety of experiences with drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, collage, textiles and design. Photography maybe employed too, with and without cameras. There are certain projects that are cornerstones of each grade level program. The projects build upon skills and past experiences while offering greater depth and new materials. The program is responsive to student interests, opportunities that arise, and my search for new and better ideas. The curriculum that follows is, therefore, subject to change. Finally, the art room is a place where a lot more happens than creating artwork. There are a lot of interactions that take place in the art room. It is these interactions, as well as specific art works, upon which the comments are based.

Please feel free to visit the art room. If you have any special artistic skill or expertise that you would be willing to share, please let me know. Most of all, art should be fun! I hope to share my enthusiasm with your child. It should be a great year.

Fourth graders will study art principles while also learning about style, and they will be encouraged to

develop their own style. A broad array of mediums will be used. The class will make the table decorations for Thanksgiving Soup, and the masks, sets and props for their French play. In the spring they will go on a field trip to The Fields at Art Omi.

Computer

Maureen Tumenas

Our goal is to help the students become proficient in computer applications and the use of computers as problem-solving tools in a team environment. To accomplish this, students will work individually and in teams on projects designed to use various applications and to incorporate their assignments in other classes.

Fourth graders will be introduced to the basic parts of the computer and some of the terminology used to describe computers, i.e. ram, rom, bits and bytes. They will learn some of the history of computing. They will be introduced to Internet safety procedures and explore copyright issues. Programs introduced will be keyboarding, using Typing Pal Jr., Microsoft Word, Inspiration (a graphic organizer) and possibly PowerPoint, as well as several online programs such as VoiceThread. Students will learn how to use networked computers, how and where files are saved locally.

The students in Grade 4 will receive letter grades as well as effort grades. Fourth graders meet twice a week. Letter grades are based on 25% keyboarding, 25% class work and participation and 50% major projects. Each grade level has a keyboarding goal. The goal for Grade 4 is 15 words per minute with 90% accuracy.

French

Mme. Maria Whalen

Our goal is to help the students to understand and speak French 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 fairy tales.

The Symtalk materials are designed to encourage active participation. The students will speak, read, and write complete sentences using the book. They will develop the ability to create their own sentences, at first using the Symtalk materials to support them and later using their imaginations to generate their own.

Each topic will be presented in a variety of ways. Activities presented using Symtalk materials will be

extended to include additional games and interactive exercises, songs, stories, and cultural materials from Francophone 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.

In the spring, the students will perform a play in French. They will memorize their lines and songs, rehearse movement and staging to clarify the text, and present the play to students in Preschool through Grade 3. Parents and teachers will be invited, too!

Materials:

- SYMTALK book *Gérard et ses copains*
- SYMTALK cards and games in class
- *Mon Anniversaire* beginner reader
- Games, songs, skits and plays to aid retention and increase fluency
- Props and pictures to encourage and support interaction and dialogue

Humanities

Sarah Pitcher-Hoffman, Jeff Uhas

The Grade 4 English curriculum 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 and for personal enjoyment. Writing assignments are developed from the literature, from class discussions, and from 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, and 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. The goals of the Grade 4 English curriculum are to develop English and study skills, to contemplate ethical values and choices, and to help students see clearly and express with clarity their thoughts on these matters.

Spelling quizzes, vocabulary quizzes, both open and closed book 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.

Texts

- *Handwriting* published by Zaner-Bloser

Novels may include:

Number the Stars; Bud, Not Buddy; Love that Dog; The Sign of the Beaver; Surviving the Applewhites; Peppermints in the Parlor

The Grade 4 history 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. In addition there is a year long 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.

Library

Jeff Uhas

The library program at BCD seeks to support the overall mission of the school through providing an atmosphere which promotes inquiry, discovery, and academic excellence while realizing each student's unique potential.

The library serves as a resource for the entire BCD community, equipping faculty as well as students with materials that complement their courses of study. In addition to serving as a resource, the Middle School library program will continue to develop students' awareness of the library and its holdings, as well as materials available through partner organizations in order to equip the students with the skills and abilities to become information-literate and independent learners. During their weekly scheduled classes, students will gain an understanding of the unique characteristics of various print and electronic media through the completion of projects including genre studies and guided research. Students will learn how to locate, use, and

synthesize information from these various sources in order to create a finished product. These projects will be guided by students' interest and structured to incorporate material from other content areas to maintain the vital connection between the classroom and the library.

Finally, the library will continue to foster a love of literature. Current and classic works will be discussed, and students will have the opportunity to check out materials of their own choosing during each class period. Finally, students will be encouraged to visit the library outside of their scheduled class period to further explore their own areas of interest.

Math

Sarah Pitcher-Hoffman

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.

The text we follow is Scott Foresman–Addison Wesley: Math—Level 4. Other sources of material will be used to enhance and enrich the Grade 4 mathematical experience. Tests and quizzes will be given as appropriate to assess progress and to help students become comfortable with different types of assessment. Tests will always be announced in advance.

Music

Heather Fishman

The music program provides an opportunity for all students to become actively involved in four basic areas of musical experience: creating, performing, listening, and history. There is a great emphasis on singing and a wide range of folk songs, part-songs, rounds, and canons is used. Music notation and symbols are taught through singing, playing Orff instruments and recorders, and folk dancing. These activities emphasize an awareness of melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and form. In addition, much time is spent developing self-confidence and the physical discipline of musical performance, as well as learning to be a

good critical listener and a polite, supportive member of an audience.

Students also explore music composition techniques on the computer, using various notation programs such as *Finale Notepad*. Classes meet one time per week in 40-minute sessions.

Physical Education

Gail Heady

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.

Science

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 Feederwatch, 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. The big spring event is a whale watch trip with the New England Aquarium. 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.

Grade 5

Art

Marilyn Cromwell

Art is an integral part of a BCD education. All students have art classes twice a week. Visual language, a powerful tool for communication and expression, is taught. Over the years, students have an opportunity to create artwork in a studio setting, to learn principles of art and to learn to reflect on artwork. The emphasis is on making art, with art history being taught peripherally through the study of individual artists, movements in art, slides and videos, and reproductions. Art is also an avenue to learn to appreciate and respect the richness of creativity in other cultures. I work with other teachers to coordinate art projects with student studies. Knowing about the time period and manipulating relevant materials enhances both experiences. I incorporate other arts into some assignments in order to tap into areas where every student is comfortable.

The art room does offer a change for students from other academic subjects. First, it is a large, messy space. Let your child know if you want him/her to use a smock, or send them to school in casual clothes on art days. More importantly, in art, there are as many right answers as there are children. There is the opportunity for individual growth through invention and exploration. Art encourages divergent thinking. I hope to foster students' ability to seek solutions to the problems the assignments set for them through their own reflection, to learn to value multiple responses, and to think creatively. These are all skills that our increasingly global, complex world will require of them. There is flexibility both in the projects I present and in the time the student has to complete them. The Art Department offers a variety of experiences with drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, collage, textiles and design. Photography maybe employed too, with and without cameras. There are certain projects that are cornerstones of each grade level program. The projects build upon skills and past experiences while offering greater depth and new materials. The program is responsive to student interests, opportunities that arise, and my constant search for new and better ideas. The curriculum that follows is, therefore, subject to change. Finally, the art room is a place where a lot more happens than creating artwork. There are a lot of interactions that take place in the art room. It is these interactions, as well as specific art works, upon which the comments are based. Please feel free to visit the art room. If you have any special artistic skill or expertise that you would be willing to share, please let me know. Most of all, art should be fun! I hope to share my enthusiasm with your child. It should be a great year.

Fifth graders will begin the year making an "all about me" self-portrait cube. They will make sculptural clay masks at Halloween time. We will repeat the joint French and Art Mardi Gras celebration for which they will create masks and scenery. Drawing will explore color and perspective as they begin to utilize sophisticated skills. I plan to repeat the trip to the Twentieth Century Wing of The Metropolitan Museum. A major culminating art experience, our "Lunch Party," will cap the year.

Computer

Maureen Tumenas

Our goal is to help the students become proficient in computer applications and the use of computers as problem-solving tools in a team environment. To accomplish this, students will work individually and in teams on projects designed to use various applications and to incorporate their assignments in other classes.

Fifth computer class meets twice a week in the computer lab. Students continue to build keyboard skills using Typing Pal Jr. We review the basic parts of the computer and file management. They continue to develop word processing and organizational skills using Microsoft Word, Inspiration (a graphic organizer) and PowerPoint. Fifth graders will be introduced to various online tools, such as goggle.net school email, Mybcd.org blogs, Atomic Learning and VoiceThread. Throughout the year good digital citizenship, as well as internet safety will be emphasized.

Students will receive letter grades as well as effort grades. Letter grades are based on 25% keyboarding, 25% class work and participation, and 50% major projects. Fifth graders meet twice a week. Each grade level has a keyboarding goal. The goal for Grade 5 is 20 words per minute with 90% accuracy.

English

Jim Fawcett

Students in Grade 5 delve into the wonder of the mythological, the fabulous, and the epic from C. S. Lewis to Lloyd Alexander and back to Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Arabian Nights*. The details of the stories are reinforced by having the students retell the story, draw pictures, create skits and memorize passages (especially from *The Iliad*). The history course in Grade 5 complements the readings in *The Iliad*, D'Aulaires' *Book of Greek Myths*, *Ye Gods*, and *The Tale of Troy*, broadening the students' cultural contact with that epoch. Compositions on assigned topics encourage each student to mold his or her own style. Grammar, spelling (sight recognition and phonics), and vocabulary skills are addressed each week. Dictation will be used to reinforce listening, punctuation, and penmanship skills.

Texts

- Grammar—*Rules of the Game*
- Poetry
- Classics—*Arabian Nights, The Iliad*
- Mythology—*Ye Gods, Tale of Troy*

Novels may include:

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; Prince Caspian; Foundling; Magician's Nephew; The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; The Silver Chair; The Horse and His Boy; The Book of Three; The Black Cauldron; The Castle of Llyr

French

Mme. Maria Whalen

Our goal is to help children become increasingly comfortable hearing, speaking, reading and writing French, and to become familiar with some of the cultural traditions in Francophone countries. We will learn various expressions and vocabulary that the students can understand and learn to use independently to generate their own conversations. Topics covered will include greetings, calendar, seasons, clothing, animals, numbers, and food. We will expand on the animal unit by doing a Mardi Gras play.

Classes will be conducted primarily in French. 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. Students will gain an intuitive sense of grammatical structures through use and the need to know how to say certain things. Oral proficiency is the ultimate goal; writing and reading are used inasmuch as they support that goal. The cultivation of a good French accent and exposure to the French culture will be integrated into our lessons.

Materials:

- *Aventure II* text
- Early Start French II multimedia pack
- A variety of French and Canadian video cassettes and DVDs
- French Stories and poems
- Realia

History

Kate Meyer

The Ancient History course in fifth grade is designed to instill in the students an appreciation 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 units covered 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, some of which are coordinated with the Shop and Art Departments. The projects will allow students to visualize and participate more fully in the lives of the people of ancient times. Videos featuring excavations of the sites being studied are shown on a regular basis. And last but not least, a major part of the fifth grade field trip to The Metropolitan Museum in New York City is a tour of the Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan and Roman collections.

Homework, short papers, tests, quizzes, and projects are all used to reinforce the material presented in class and in the readings. A short research paper will be assigned in the spring term.

Texts:

- *The Story of the World: Volume One* by Susan Wise Bauer (Peace Hill Publishing)
- *Usborne Encyclopedia of World Religions* (EDC Publishing)

Library

Jeff Uhas

During their weekly scheduled classes, students will gain an understanding of the unique characteristics of various print and electronic media through the completion of projects including genre studies and guided research. Students will learn how to locate, use, and

synthesize information from these various sources in order to create a finished product. These projects will be guided by students' interest and structured to incorporate material from other content areas to maintain the vital connection between the classroom and the library.

Finally, the library will continue to foster a love of literature. Current and classic works will be discussed, and students will have the opportunity to check out materials of their own choosing during each class period. Finally, students will be encouraged to visit the library outside of their scheduled class period to further explore their own areas of interest.

Math

Ned Douglas, Geoff Perkins

When we teach math to students in Grade 5, 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. *The text we use is Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley: Math—Level 5.* We also use 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.

Music

Heather Fishman

The music program provides an opportunity for all students to become actively involved in four basic areas of musical experience: creating, performing, listening, and history. There is a great emphasis on singing and a wide range of folk songs, part-songs, rounds, and canons is used. Music notation and symbols are taught through singing, playing Orff instruments and recorders, and folk dancing. These activities emphasize an awareness of melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and form. In addition, much time is spent developing self-confidence and the physical discipline of musical performance, as well as learning to be a good critical listener and a polite, supportive member of an audience.

Students also explore music composition techniques on the computer, using various notation programs such as *Finale Notepad*. Classes meet one time per week in 40-minute sessions.

Physical Education

Gail Heady

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.

Science

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; the worm; 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.

Materials:

- *Human Body Systems* (Glencoe Science, publisher)
- *Super Science Magazine* (Scholastic)

Grade 6

Art

Marilyn Cromwell

Art is an integral part of a BCD education. All students have art classes twice a week. Visual language, a powerful tool for communication and expression, is taught. Over the years, students have an opportunity to create artwork in a studio setting, to learn principles of art and to learn to reflect on artwork. The emphasis is on making art, with art history being taught through the study of individual artists, movements in art, slides and videos, and reproductions. Art is also an avenue to learn to appreciate and respect the richness of creativity in other cultures. I work with other teachers to coordinate art projects with student studies. Knowing about the time period and manipulating relevant materials enhances both experiences. I incorporate other arts into some assignments in order to tap into areas where every student is comfortable.

The art room does offer a change for students from other academic subjects. First, it is a large, messy space. Let your child know if you want him/her to use a smock, or send them to school in casual clothes on art days. More importantly, in art, there are as many right answers as there are children. There is the opportunity for individual growth through invention and exploration. Art encourages divergent thinking. I hope to foster students' ability to seek solutions to the problems the assignments set for them through their own reflection, to learn to value multiple responses, and to think creatively. These are all skills that our increasingly global, complex world will require of them. There is flexibility both in the projects I present and in the time the student has to complete them. The Art Department offers a variety of experiences with drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, collage, textiles and design. Photography maybe employed too, with and without cameras. There are certain projects that are cornerstones of each grade level program. The projects build upon skills and past experiences while offering greater depth and new materials. The program is responsive to student interests, opportunities that arise, and my constant search for new and better ideas. The curriculum that follows is, therefore, subject to change. Finally, the art room is a place where a lot more happens than creating artwork. There are a lot of interactions that take place in the art room. It is these interactions, as well as specific art works, upon which the comments are based.

Please feel free to visit the art room. If you have any special artistic skill or expertise that you would be willing to share, please let me know. Most of all, art should be fun! I hope to share our enthusiasm with your child. It should be a great year.

In the fall, sixth graders will study landscape as subject matter for art and simultaneously explore the work of the Hudson River School painters. We will take a trip to Olana, former home of Hudson River painter Frederic

Church, in Hudson, NY. Students will also explore portraiture in many different ways, including creating a character from a plaster mask built on their own face. They will make a series of portrait-related drawings and a self-portrait painting.

Computer

Maureen Tumenas

Our goal is to help the students become proficient in computer applications and the use of computers as problem-solving tools in a team environment. To accomplish this, students will work individually and in teams on projects designed to use various applications and to incorporate their assignments in other classes.

By the end of Middle School, students should have a firm grasp of how technology relates to information management and communication. They should be comfortable with keyboarding, word processing, file management, spreadsheets, desktop publishing, web design, introductory programming, databases, multimedia, and graphic design. They should understand the issues and importance of responsible, effective, and ethical Internet use and demonstrate good digital citizenship. The students should see the computer as a tool that they can use both to research and learn about the world around them and to create new media and to collaborate with others.

Sixth graders will use keyboarding software—Typer Shark and Typing Pal Jr., Microsoft Office Suite, including Word, Excel and Power Point; and Inspiration as well as many other online tools. Students in Grade 6 have class twice a week and will receive letter grades as well as effort grades. Grades are based on keyboarding, class work, and participation and major projects. The keyboarding goal for Grade 6 is 25 words per minute with 90% accuracy.

English

Rachel Siegel

The Grade 6 English curriculum includes literature and activities which continue to develop skills of comprehension and self-expression. The Grade 6 year is critical to the awakening of interpretative skills, the emergence of symbolic thinking, and growing awareness of social order and moral structure. Using these developmental opportunities, a course of reading has been selected to reflect on the ways in which a society deals with its fears of "differences." Through texts such as *The Endless Steppe*, *The Cay*, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, *Out of the Dust*, *The Upstairs Room*, *Banner in the Sky* and *The Giver*, students explore how stereotypes are created, how prejudice thrives, and how we as individuals and as a society might respond. Class discussion, short opinion compositions, drama, art, and debate are among

the techniques employed to approach this topic. A Harlem Renaissance unit culminating in a research paper on an important figure of the period may be an exciting part of this exploration.

Creative writing skills include the recognition and use of similes, metaphors and other literary devices, and an emphasis on the use of the five senses, concrete details, and personal experience. Compound sentences and subordinate clauses are introduced in expository writing. Work in grammar, spelling, and vocabulary skills is carried on throughout the year.

Texts include:

- Grammar—*Exercises in English Grammar, Punctuation Power* and other grammar texts
- Vocabulary—teacher produced lists
- Anthologies—Poetry

Novels may include:

The Cay; Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry; The Witch of Blackbird Pond; Out of the Dust; The Upstairs Room; The Giver; Banner in the Sky; Slave Dancer; Shane; Endless Steppe; Dragonwings; Shabanu; Kids Discover World War II

French

John Dreger

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, audiocassettes, and videocassettes. Grades are based on classroom participation, homework, tests and quizzes, both written and oral.

Materials

- *Discovering French Partie IA*; Valette and Valette; text, workbook, video and audio cassettes
- Additional videocassettes from our French library
- Supplemental material as needed

Geography

Geoff Ashworth

There has been considerable publicity recently about the past performance of U.S. students with regard to geographic literacy. It is our goal in Grade 6 to expose students to a short geography curriculum in order to achieve the following objectives:

- To give students a basic understanding of geography in order to encourage intelligent thinking about current affairs, and to correct misconceptions about foreign lands and peoples.
- To introduce students to the concepts of different cultures, yet realizing that basic human needs are the same worldwide.
- To encourage students to read social studies books other than textbooks.
- To emphasize the development of thinking skills by encouraging the discovery of new information.
- To provide opportunities for students to make rational judgments and decisions.

These objectives are met by a strategy of combining written and oral presentations, games, and class discussions, and working from the textbook *World Explorer*, James B. Kracht, Prentice-Hall. Unfortunately time does not permit us to emphasize every country and culture, but we should reach a variety of peoples and places.

Homework will be given three nights a week, and should take about half an hour per evening. We will be viewing several video tapes taken from the PBS series "The Miracle Planet", a BBC video Flight of the Condor", and a clip from a Nova series "The Nomads of the Amazon", which contains scenes showing families in their national costume, i.e. naked. If any parent objects to their child seeing any of these films they should let me know as soon as possible.

Latin

Rachel Siegel

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 the Latin language and Roman culture. The text is the *Cambridge Latin Course*, which gives students practice in reading simple Latin prose and exposes them to Roman culture through stories based upon the archaeological evidence from the excavation of Pompeii. The curriculum also serves to reinforce students' knowledge of English grammar, as they learn fundamental Latin concepts with respect to four of the eight parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives and pronouns. Students' knowledge of the language is reinforced through spoken and written exercises and quizzes, as well as games and short skits based on stories from the text.

Pre-Algebra

Ned Douglas

Our goal in teaching Grade 6 Pre-Algebra is to help to create feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and competence in our students by encouraging them to see patterns, understand processes, and to use skills. Students at this age are usually ready to move away from the world of arithmetic toward the world of Pre-Algebra. We try to demystify math at this level by helping students make the connections between what we study in class and the real world, and to expand their critical thinking.

Our text is *Middle School Mathematics: Course 2*, published by Prentice Hall. Other resources include calculators, puzzles, games and work sheets. Students will work on note taking and writing. Topics studied include the vocabulary of Algebra, the decimal system, positive and negative numbers, fractions, equations and inequalities, geometry, ratio, proportion and percent, the coordinate plane, volume and surface area, and probability. Enrichment material is made available to all students to keep their level of interest and enthusiasm high. Assessment of progress includes self-tests, quizzes, section tests, and records of homework completion so that students always receive feedback to let them know where they stand.

Mathematics

Geoff Perkins

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. Students will work both individually and collaboratively to develop a keen number sense. They will spend time on note-taking, writing, and study skills. Emphasis is placed on awareness and proper use of mathematical language. Students study more Geometry and learn some geometric constructions.

The text we use is *Prentice-Hall Middle School Mathematics: Course 1*. We will employ calculators as appropriate. Students will be graded on the basis of their tests, quizzes, homework completion, class participation, and participation in group activities. Tests are always announced well in advance. We encourage student contribution in all activities as a way of earning extra credit. We also provide many enrichment activities that are available to all.

Music

Heather Fishman

The music program provides an opportunity for all students to become actively involved in four basic areas of musical experience: creating, performing, listening, and history. There is a great emphasis on singing and a wide range of folk songs, part-songs, rounds, and canons is used. Music notation and symbols are taught through singing, playing Orff instruments and recorders, and folk dancing. These activities emphasize an awareness of melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and form. In addition, much time is spent developing self-confidence and the physical discipline of musical performance, as well as learning to be a good critical listener and a polite, supportive member of an audience.

Students also explore music composition techniques on the computer, using various notation programs such as *Finale Notepad*. Classes meet one time per week in 40-minute sessions.

Physical Education

Gail Heady

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.

Earth Science & Astronomy

Tim Gore

The theme for Grade 6 is 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 Science 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.

Materials

- *Science Explorer: Astronomy* (Pearson/Prentice Hall, publisher, 2007)
- *Super Science Magazine* (Scholastic)

Program of Studies

Berkshire Country Day School

Where you belong.

After-School Programs
2009–10

After-School Programs

Sports Philosophy

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 which 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 elementary/middle school level 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. Finally, a basic tenet of the BCD sports experience is that students are encouraged not to give up and quit. After a number of years of practice and play, even students who never felt that they had any particular ability find themselves playing well and truly enjoying being on the team and in the sport.

At Berkshire Country Day School, after-school sports are required for all students in Grades 5 through 9 in the spring and fall and are available on an optional basis for 4th graders. In the winter, there are numerous optional sports offerings for Grades 4-9 as well as the Friday Ski Program which is open to students from Pre-K to Grade 9. Students who have particular interest beyond the scope of what BCD offers (such as tennis, riding, swimming, karate, etc.) may choose an alternate program in the fall and/or spring as long as it meets certain criteria such as meeting three times per week, provides active as opposed to passive activity, and is 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 as 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, there are no required interscholastic games at this 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, everyone is on a team and everyone is involved.

Theater Philosophy

There are many opportunities for students to participate in productions throughout the year. The after-school theater and film program at BCD allows students to become members of a collaborative team with a singular goal. The fun, excitement, and hard work involved necessitates that each student play an integral role in the process, daring to contribute their own thoughts and ideas in safe environment. Members of the cast and crew engage together in artistically challenging productions that model both sound theatrical practices and positive group dynamics. Students learn to make themselves and their work public while celebrating the work, ideas, and processes of ensemble mates. The guiding principle of the BCD theater and film program is to provide an arena in which students come into their own by consciously searching for and finding each other as both human beings and artists. Through this process, they learn to regard themselves and others as enough from the get-go. Executing theater and film work in this respectful manner, each student can feel free to answer his or her own questions in an honest manner and receive vigorous direction within a space of acceptance. The teacher presents a clear vision and is both proactive and highly energetic so that specific advances may arise out of each student's own tenacious exploration.

Middle School Theater

Students in Grades 5 and 6 work on original material under gentle, knowledgeable instruction. Through brainstorming, improvisation, games and writing exercises, the casts create short pieces of theater that draw on their own interests, ideas, and strengths. The focus is on the process: finding one's voice, respecting all ideas, and practicing theater fundamentals. The end result is the proud presentation of that work to the school community. The Grade 6 production takes place in late fall with the Grade 5 show happening in late winter.

Upper School Theater & Film

In the Upper School, students have the opportunity to take their interests to the next level. Autumn is the time for a small production in Grades 8 and 9. Through the expansion of their knowledge and skill at improvisation and collaboration, students will engage in a completely improvised performance. This might be an original story with improvised scenes, a sketch comedy improvisation show (akin to *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*), or even a "Choose Your Own Adventure" play where the audience's choices guide the story. In the winter, students in Grades 7 through 9 audition for a full-scale production giving them experience with a larger ensemble, involvement in the technical aspects of scenery, lighting, props, and costumes, and the thrill of telling a story on a larger scale. This production might be a full-length drama, a musical, or Shakespeare, differing from year to year. Finally, there is a small digital film production in the spring.

Students write a screenplay through a collaborative process that includes ideas from all participants. They then set about producing the project learning about acting for film, camera work, continuity, editing, and more. All Upper School performances and screenings will take place at the Winthrop Theatre.

Limits of Participation:

To keep from decimating the sports teams, a cap will be placed on participation in the theater productions as follows:

- Fall: 9 students (seniority by grade, then first-come, first-served)
- Winter: No set cap (audition to determine correct number for given show)
- Spring: 9 students (seniority by grade, then first-come, first-served)

Grade 7 may do only 1 season of theater (winter)

Grade 8 may do 2 seasons of theater

Grade 9 may do 2 seasons of theater and petition for 3

Petition Committee will consist of at least the Theater Director and the Associate Head of Upper School