



## Navigating the Seventh Grade Curriculum

Seventh grade is the “crossover” grade. For the first time, students are closer to their high school graduation than they are to their early days in Kindergarten! Everything is maturing; everything is changing; everything can be overwhelming. Never has there been a more important time for strengthened home-school connections. Wood Acres curriculum reflects more strongly than ever the importance of careful attention to a student’s total education- academic, social, emotional, and physical.

### English Studies

A continuation of Wood Acres’ program at the seventh grade level includes in depth novel studies and class discussions to analyze text. The core reading components of English Studies in seventh grade include thought and response to higher order thinking skills. Literary concepts such as foreshadowing, symbolism, irony, focus, novel organization, figures of speech, plot and dialogue analysis, and critical peer review will be woven into the reading and discussion of each novel. Additional outside reading will occur, often related to cross curricular study, to enhance growing knowledge of literary concepts.

Writing will have a dual focus in seventh grade. The actual mechanics and grammar of writing will be practiced using actual novel selections and texts plus the often amusing Painless Grammar series. Advanced sentence and paragraph structure, essay format, rich vocabulary practice, and personal writing style will then lead into the actual creative writing process: pre-writing activities, drafting, revising, peer evaluation exercises, and sharing quality work. The use of laptops will provide students ample opportunities to continue skill building with word processing, presentation programs, and online research. A subtle but constant reminder of on-line safety and protocol will guide all use of technology.

Oral communication will be bountiful as students deliver oral peer evaluations, share quality work, prepare and deliver short speeches from the special Wood Acres podium, and practice the merits of productive critical conversation to debate topics and issues. Socratic questioning used liberally in our program also enhances a student’s savvy in learning to speak well and confidently in front of peers, teachers, and a wider public audience.

Vocabulary is taught within the context of novel studies with an additional focus on etymology. Greek and Latin roots and phrases are taught to enhance vocabulary acquisition, appreciate the roots that link world languages (especially our ISA focus on Spanish), and become more adept at deciphering the meaning of their ever-growing adult spoken and written vocabulary.

## **Algebra**

Correlated to the National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics Focal Point standards, our curriculum is a systematic and rigorous program that provides in-depth coverage of proportionality, formulas, linear equations, functions, and statistical analysis. Relevant and interesting problem solving, integrated in every lesson, is the foundation of a solid mathematics course that develops algebraic thinking in the seventh grade text. Three types of enrichment lessons that include acceleration, expansion, and extension help deepen student understanding of and appreciation for the power and beauty of mathematics. Prescriptive assessment throughout the program gives teachers real help in tailoring instruction and practice to benefit students. Robust online support exists for teachers, students, and families as they all review and grow in their algebraic competency and deep understanding of what it means to not just solve equations, but to actually create them from real-life scenarios. Online text resources for algebraic study include in depth study and discovery of real numbers, expressions, equations, and inequalities, polynomials and factoring, two and three dimensional geometry, and patterns and non-linear functions. Cross-curricular applications of mathematics to science, art, technology, and music help build strong curriculum links for a seventh grader and meaningful learning.

## **Geography, History, & Culture**

More commonly referred to as Social Studies, Wood Acres considers each component important enough for academic consideration on its own merits. Based on the National Geography Standards established by The National Council for Geographic Education, student knowledge of where we are in time and space is a vital life skill in an ever-shrinking global community. Geographic skills are covered directly and especially focused on the Eastern Hemisphere in seventh grade. Further student learning comes in the core areas of history, economics, culture, ethics, and belief systems as well as social and political systems. Civic understanding is fostered through studies of national identity, Constitutional heritage, current events, and citizenship. Each area of study is enhanced with study skills, visual learning, map and globe work, and class participation. Vocabulary development is vital to the conversation of the social sciences as well as student work in research with primary sources, artifacts, and retrospective analysis of historical events.

Early American history comes alive in seventh graders' study as they are continuously challenged to answer essential questions and focus on the "whys" of history as opposed to simply memorizing dates and events. Seventh graders embrace a global perspective, engage in on-going historical dialogue, draw comparisons of events of the past and those of the present, and take away a deep understanding of early American history. Their studies culminate in an awesome class trip to Washington, DC to study first hand "The Triumvirate of Democracy"- the three branches of our government. Memories are made @ the Woods!

## **Science**

The Wood Acres School's groundbreaking spiral science curriculum literally leaps from the mind-numbing "read the chapter and answer the questions" approach to a hand-on, experiential laboratory setting that has seventh graders truly learning and living the scientific process. Taught through integrated CELLS (Core Experience Learning LabS) curriculum modules provide in-depth study of atmosphere, cellular organization, genes and proteins, cell cycle and cancer, adaptation, solutes and solubility, atomic structure, chemical reactions, sensory

perception, and a capstone inquiry at year's end on disease. Experiencing this type of curriculum demands a state-of-the-art laboratory that truly allows each student to practice and experiment with the scientific process at all times. This type of science instruction also stretches student patience with trial and error, fosters both individual and partner work, and takes creative "out-of-the-box" thinking to a new level. The science-math connection is strong throughout the program and provides seventh graders with the tools to become independent researchers with problem-based projects. Standardized test scores in the area of science yearly reinforce how outstanding student achievement is with a program of this caliber and depth.

## **Spanish**

With Wood Acres' Spanish program beginning with three-year-olds, the student of Spanish in seventh grade is quite advanced. Taught with a formal curriculum imported from Spain, the acquisition of foreign language skills is outstanding at Wood Acres. Instructional methodology includes TPR, total pupil response, which encourages students to become comfortable in speaking, listening, writing, and reading Spanish. Bilingual selections in the library assist students in leisure reading in a second language as well. Students in seventh grade are also exposed to the works of some of Spain's best authors and artists and learn much about Spanish culture and its influence on American culture. With Wood Acres' designation as an International Spanish Academy (ISA) through the Consulate in Washington, DC and Spain, Wood Acres students will have the unprecedented opportunity to excel in this language and receive advanced placement in any area high school, ISA high school program if applicable, international school, or private high school.

## **Physical Education**

Seventh graders are more than ready to forego the traditional playground activities for a "hipper" and more age-appropriate program. Students enjoy a wide range of experiences that include specialized programs on-campus focused on individual strength, agility, and stress-reduction such as Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, Fencing, and Zumba. Curriculum includes fitness, agility, strength building, aerobics, and team sports. Mental and physical fitness, sportsmanship, and school spirit all find a place in our PE program for seventh graders. Wood Acres students participate in hundreds of outstanding after school community based sports teams such as baseball, softball, football, tennis, competitive swimming, soccer, lacrosse, cheerleading, track and field, dance, and gymnastics. Information about these teams is readily available at school or from Wood Acres parents.

## **Art**

Taught by an accomplished artist in her own right, the Wood Acres art program for seventh graders is a natural continuation of rich curriculum of the Grammar School and sixth grade Upper School programs. With an ever-refined eye for line, form and perspective seventh graders blend didactic instruction with creative, edgy and captivating art projects. Students display their pieces at a Fine Arts Show both winter and spring. Students are trained to look at the world through the eyes of an artist, seeing lines of symmetry, perspective, geometry, color, balance, shading, tone, and depth as the art of nature and man's creation. Art is a very natural and very important outlet for the unique developmental stages of a young adult.

## **Music-Band**

Blending classic music instruction with a strong youth appeal, the Wood Acres band helps create students who become educated audiences as well as engaged performers. All 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders participate in band and play an instrument of their choice. Students read music, perform in concerts, and learn about the culture surrounding the music they study. Performance band is both part of the academic day and is also offered as optional private study. Band concerts give students ample opportunities to prepare and perform in front of live audiences. The Wood Acres School is one of only a few private schools to offer band during the school day and as part of the student tuition (students rent or purchase instruments). Wood Acres is also proud of the caliber of the teachers in our music program who are talented performers and musicians in their own right.

## **Life 101**

This class meets weekly with the Dean of the Upper School and/or school Counselor to discuss and reflect on topics that focus on the whole person. Seventh graders are challenged to self evaluate, set and examine their personal goals, reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement, and determine how they can capitalize on their personal assets for their own future benefit and in service to others. As service learning is an important tenant of a complete education, we also use the Life 101 class time to plan and work on numerous service projects throughout the year.

Note: While academic study is the core of The Wood Acres Upper School, we also realize the daily need for students to “chill”, relax, and catch their breaths to continue the academic day. Work on proper and acceptable socialization is key to helping our Upper School students be well educated, resilient, well rounded, and fun to be around. The sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years can be challenging, but they also can reap the greatest rewards if the entire school community is focused and committed to student growth and achievement.