



Middle School Curriculum Grades 6-8

Farber Hebrew Day School's Middle School Curriculum is predicated upon a philosophy of intellectual curiosity, academic exploration, and social-emotional maturation to prepare the students for a college preparatory high school program while furthering the goal of Modern Orthodoxy, to fully engage with the world through the lens of Torah, while reinforcing the connections to the land, people, and State of Israel.

An Overview

Chumash: *Chumash* is the basis for faith and identity in Judaism. Study of the written text given to our people by divine revelation provides the underpinnings to understand the beginnings of the Jewish people and their purpose. The *Chumash* forms the foundation of our legal and ethical system.

Textual skills and critical thinking skills are emphasized. Students learn the structure of the *sefer* and each parasha's place in the *sefer*. The exegetical methodology of Rashi is examined in depth. Appreciation of Midrash and its application to the interpretation of the text is explored. Comparisons with other exegetes such as Nachmanides, Ibn Ezra, and Seforno are introduced. Students are encouraged to extract meaning from the context of the book.

By the end of Middle School, students should be able to:

- Summarize Biblical narrative
- Apply reading strategies to comprehend text
- Identify roots, prefixes and suffixes of new words
- Use dictionary meanings to understand roots of new words

- Use critical thinking skills to analyze and intuit the reason for a commentator's explanation.

Grade 6: Sefer Shemot

Revelation, Law and Personal Responsibility

Grade 7: Sefer Bemidbar

The power of the narrative and the establishment of a tribal union

Grade 8: Sefer Vayikra

A Holy Nation: Internal and External manifestation

Talmud: In the Middle School the students continue to build upon the foundations laid with the Bonayich Educational Services™ Mishna and Talmud course of study. Using the historical development of the Talmud the curriculum introduced to the students during the earlier Grades, the students finish their Mishna mastery at the V'Shinantam level. Talmud is then similarly built using historical and linguistic cues to comprehend the structure of the Talmudic exposition on the page at the V'dibarta bam level.

Under the rubric of *Torat Hatannaim*, the historical layer of the *Tannaim's* contributions to the Talmudic opus, the students study the form, structure, and logical constructs of the *Mishna*. This is followed by deciphering the work of the *Amoraim*, known as the *Gemara*, which expounded upon the *Mishna*. In Middle School the focus is on vocabulary development combined with linguistic sensitivity to the two historical layers of the *Talmud*.

By the end of Middle School, students should be able to:

- Comfortably navigate a page of the (Vilna edition) *Talmud*.
- Identify the *Amoraim* by their historical and geographical placement and use those skills to identify the flow of the *Sugyot*, the legal disputes and discussions, of the *Amoraim*.
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of Aramaic and Aramaic grammar and syntax.
- Begin to identify, decipher and study *Shakla V'Tarya*, the question and answer format of elucidating what is in the text and the logic used to analyze the query.

Grade 6:

In Grade 6, mastery of *Mishna* culminating with an introduction to the text of the *Talmud* is the focus.

Grade 7:

Talmud becomes the focus with the students studying the tenth chapter of tractate *P'sachim*, which allows them to become knowledgeable about the Passover observance of the *Seder*.

Grade 8:

Leaving the realm of ritual, the students explore a different sub-genre within the Talmud oeuvre, personal responsibility to society with the study of the third chapter *Hamafkid* of tractate *Baba Metziah* of the Babylonian *Talmud*.

Navi: Prophets (*Navi*) is the continuation of our destiny as a people and as an ethical force. Divine principles and imperatives teach that God is supervising the world - our actions have consequences, and we are responsible for those consequences.

Textual skills and critical thinking skills are the focus of this subject. Students learn the structure of the *Sefer* and its relationship to the other books of the Prophets. The exegetical methodologies of *Rashi*, *Radak*, and *Metzudat David* are explored. Students will extrapolate the universal lessons that enabled these books to enter the canon. Projects and reflective assignments allow the students to apply the lessons to their own maturation and understanding of the function of the study of the Prophets in our Canon.

By the end of Middle School, students should be able to:

- Outline the chronology of the Judean and Israelite kingdoms.
- Summarize Biblical narrative.
- Apply reading strategies to comprehend a text.
- Identify roots, prefixes, and suffixes of new words found in the text.
- Use a dictionary to look up the meaning of a root word.
- Use critical thinking skills to analyze and intuit the reason for a commentary's explanation.

Grade 6: The Book of Shmuel I

The evolution of the monarchy and the unification of the tribes into a nation.

Grade 7: The Book of Shmuel II: The Mantle of Leadership: The Kingdom of David.

Grade 8: The Book of Melachim I: The Davidic Dynasty, Solomon, and the splitting of the Kingdom: The different faces of leadership.

Hebrew Language (Ivrit): Hebrew education specifically speaking Modern Conversational Hebrew was one of the original educational objectives that drove the founding of the Farber Hebrew Day School in the Metropolitan Detroit, Michigan area.

Our long term vision, with an implementation period of 5 - 6 years, is to fine tune the articulation of the Hebrew program in our different divisions to create the Farber graduate who is fluent in Modern Conversational Hebrew, knowledgeable about current events in Israel, and conversant in classical and more contemporary Hebrew literature.

Hebrew, like most languages, is learned through the four areas of language acquisition: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Of these four areas, auditory comprehension naturally pairs with fluency of speech, while reading comprehension parallels the ability to communicate clearly in writing.

Often, students of second languages are more proficient in reading than any other domain. Our goal is to create students who have a functional vocabulary of the language during the Elementary School years and can demonstrate this level of mastery through writing and reading. During the Middle School years, the students will develop fluency of spoken language and auditory comprehension using the vocabulary mastered during the elementary years through the Ulpan-Or program.

Students in Grades 6 – 8 will become proficient in Conversational Modern Hebrew using the Ulpan-Or curriculum. The Ulpan-Or program uses the techniques of ulpan to engender an intuitive approach to communicating verbally in Hebrew. After three years, the students are expected to be able to carry a conversation with their peers or family members in Hebrew related to current events in Israel or local news.

The Ulpan-Or program presents differentiated levels of material to allow the instructor to assign varied assignments to their classes.

Language Arts: The study of language and literature is the vehicle of creative and analytical thought that enables students to critically think about and understand what they read, hear, or view. Language and literature also provide a medium to teach the students how to communicate their beliefs, explore ideas, and make decisions. The curriculum challenges students to develop literary proficiency through exposure to a variety of texts which will enable them to become effective and mature writers, speakers, readers, listeners, and viewers.

Students will work through their ideas in writing. Continuing to build upon the *Step Up to Writing* program, the writing process will take students through a developmentally challenging experience. Students will work toward precision, purposefulness, originality, and sophistication through research, organization, and drafting strategies.

The individualized nature of the Middle School English program builds upon the strengths and interests of each student. Students have many opportunities to present their work in a variety of creative formats and venues. Instruction in reading and writing strategies, grammar, and vocabulary is embedded in every unit. Students' achievement is monitored through various modes of assessment.

Grade 6 English:

Integrates the processes of reading, writing, and listening, with the content area of literature throughout the year. Students will examine literary elements and various genres. Building upon the *Step Up to Writing* curriculum, students explore a variety of writing exercises. Instruction in reading and writing strategies, grammar, and vocabulary is embedded in every unit.

Grade 7 English:

The program continues to explore literary analysis through age-appropriate material. It builds on students' prior experiences with greater rigor and challenge in its approach to the study of language and literature. Students will continue to acquire an appreciation for literature through selections by critically acclaimed young adult authors who foster a respect for diversity. Stories that examine the process of making decisions, or becoming adept in survival skills, are two wide-ranging themes that will be explored. Literary elements will continue to be studied through real-life and fictional characters.

Grade 8 English:

The program continues to integrate the language arts processes and content areas to reinforce and extend the literary elements and writing strategies learned in Grades six and seven. Students become active participants in their own learning process. Through more complex analysis, students will examine language and literature in the context of exploring the world and new ideas. Selections represent a variety of styles and points of view that are reflective of the diversity in the world of literature.

Math: The Middle School math curriculum encourages students to see mathematics as an exciting, useful, and creative field of study. While students follow their own developmental timetable, they also regularly engage in thoughtful activities tied to their emerging

capabilities. Some of those areas include: finding and imposing structure, conjecturing and verifying, thinking hypothetically, comprehending cause and effect, and abstracting and generalizing.

Students will see algebra and geometry interconnecting with each other and with other content areas within the curriculum. They will have experience with both the geometric representation of algebraic ideas (visual models), and the algebraic representation of geometric ideas (coordinate grids). They will see the value of interpreting both algebraically and geometrically such important mathematical ideas as the slope of a line and the Pythagorean relationship.

By the end of Middle School, students will:

- Understand meanings of operations and how they relate to one another
- Compute fluently and make reasonable estimates
- Understand patterns, relations, and functions
- Represent and analyze mathematical situations and structures using algebraic symbols
- Analyze change in various contexts
- Formulate questions that can be addressed with data and collect, organize, and display relevant data to answer them
- Select and use appropriate statistical methods to analyze data
- Develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based on data
- Understand and apply basic concepts of probability

Grade 6 Math:

Using Singapore Math, the focus of this class is to extend students' understanding of numbers and computation to include basic operations involving decimals, percentages, and fractions. Concepts and skills are presented within the context of problem solving that require the use of reasoning and communication. Students will develop an understanding of numbers to include rational and irrational numbers in the real number system.

Grade 7 Pre-Algebra:

The focus of this class is to give students a foundation and preparation for Algebra. The units of study include an enriched application based course of study. Concepts are presented within the context of real-life problem solving, requiring the use of reasoning skills in solving and exploring mathematical operations.

Grade 8 Algebra:

The goal of the 8th Grade math program is to give the students the ability to investigate, interpret, and communicate solutions to mathematical and real-world problems using patterns, functions, and algebra, and to have all students develop fluency in the computation of real numbers. Algebra examines the basic structure of real numbers, algebraic expressions, data analysis, probability, and the elementary properties of functions.

Grade 8 Enrichment:

Maintaining the curricular goals of intellectual curiosity and academic exploration coupled with the social-emotional development of the middle school student, motivated and high performing students will utilize the Art of Problem Solving Curriculum to enrich the Algebra curriculum. There are also independent units of study available within the Art of Problem Solving Series in Number Theory and Counting and Probability.

All students are encouraged to join the Math Olympiad and MathCounts. 8th Grade students are invited to compete individually in the American Mathematics Competition.

Social Studies: The study of history promotes individual and collective self-understanding by examining the record of the past. It develops a way of thinking that enables students to identify trends and relations of human existence. This curriculum provides students with a global perspective and a solid grounding in the methods and fields of history, while discovering patterns and connections.

By the end of Middle School, students should be able to:

- Locate, analyze and evaluate information found in primary and secondary source documents.
- Use different media to gain a better understanding of past and present historical periods.
- Compare historical documents to gain information and insight into various lifestyles.
- Interpret geographical information of regions.
- Compare and contrast different societies in different historical periods.
- Make connections between information from different texts.
- Organize and support the accuracy of information, opinions, and ideas.
- Research data to produce a document that reflects mastery of research skills.

Grades 6 and 7 World Studies:

The Middle School World Studies curriculum for Grades 6 and 7 highlights the Age of Exploration & World Cultures: history from ancient empires and civilizations through the development of the modern era. Focus is on the chronological and thematic understanding of history and the culture of the people living at the time. Students will build an understanding of the ancient world by applying concepts of geography, economics, political systems, and culture to present-day scenarios. This mix will provide the background knowledge and thinking skills necessary to prepare students for high school instruction.

Grade 8 Medieval Jewish History:

Students will realize that Judaism and the Jewish people do not exist in a vacuum and that Jews were intimately affected by the events of the world around them. Students will explore the history of the Jewish people from 1000 C.E. through the 16th century, focusing on the growth and culture of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities in light of the hardships posed by living in the medieval world.

With an eye on comprehending the critical theory of history, using facts and events to understand why events happened or societies reacted, the students learn about their people's history and gain a perspective on their personal identity and the evolution of religion and social practices. Utilizing the historical methods they study, eighth Grade students also complete a multidisciplinary Holocaust research project that culminates in a Holocaust Remembrance Day (*Yom HaShoah*) program that is presented to the entire school.

Our focus on primary documents delivers two benefits. The first is high level, critical theory, academic study of history. The second is a respect and realization of the legitimacy of the historical record of the Jewish people.

Science: Science is a way for students to understand the world around them. The classes are designed so that students will have opportunities to learn essential science content, but to also be able to practice being a scientist or engineer.

By the end of Middle School, students should be able to:

- *Ask questions and define problems*
- *Develop and use models*
- *Plan and carry out investigations*
- *Analyze and interpret data*

- *Use math and computational thinking*
- Construct explanations and design solutions
- Engage in arguments from evidence
- Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information

Grade 6:

The Students explore the world around them through the study of Earth Science. A focus on Earth systems such as energy, biogeochemical cycles, and human impacts on Earth systems is introduced in this class. Solid Earth and the interior composition, oceans and climate are major unit themes. The Earth in space and time allows the students to understand where they fit in the structure of the galaxy and how they impact the future of the Earth's existence.

Grade 7 Life Science:

The students will begin to understand how living things are created and exist. Through the organization and development of living systems, this class focuses on cells and their structures and organic molecules. The interdependence of living systems and the environment plays a key role in understanding photosynthesis and respiration, ecosystems, and populations, which allows the students in 7th Grade to examine the idea of evolution and biodiversity.

Grade 8 Physical Science:

This course covers introductory physical science, with an emphasis on physics and chemistry. Topics explored include the history and philosophy of science, scientific methods, classical physics, properties of matter, waves and electromagnetism, general chemistry, and modern physics. There is an emphasis on the importance of using scientific *models* to describe everyday observable phenomena, so that the students will begin to think like scientists.

Instructional Materials: Joy Hakim's, The Story of Science: Newton at the Center, and Science Explorer: Chemical Building Blocks.

Art: Students receive art instruction in many different medium. From working with clay to creating self-portraits, students explore how art is a reflection of the world around them.

Physical Education: Our physical education program promotes our students' social, emotional, physical, and mental growth by providing opportunities for teamwork, cooperation, and fitness.