

Description of Middle School Electives

MUSIC

Performance-Music

Concert Band: This is a two-trimester class (trimester I and II) for brass and percussion musicians (flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, baritone) who have at least one year of instrumental lessons or have completed the SMA emerging-musicians class. Students learn music theory and a little about the history of jazz. Classical, rock and jazz band tunes are prepared and performed in a culminating formal performance.

Orchestra: This is a two-trimester class (trimester II and III) for musicians of stringed instruments (violin, viola, bass, cello) who have at least one year of lessons or have completed the SMA emerging-musicians class. Students develop more sophisticated knowledge of music theory and how to play in concert. Classical orchestra music is prepared and performed in a culminating formal trimester performances. Field trips to hear professional musicians and to play for the elderly at Meridian occur each year.

Hand Bells: Bells of various size and timber are played with a mix of techniques. No prior music experience is necessary. Students learn rhythm, counting and the basics of note reading. One formal performance culminates the trimester with less formal performances possibly occurring during prayer services. Ten to twelve ringers make up the hand bell group.

Show Choir: The trimester course is for male and female students. The choir learns a variety of classical and pop songs while studying basic music theory and ear training. Auditions are not required. Enthusiasm for singing is the prerequisite. There is one formal concert per trimester.

Honor Show Choir: This is a one-trimester elective with two prerequisites: 1) previous enrollment in Middle School show choir or audition with the choir teacher, and 2) a strong motivation to delve more deeply into performance techniques such as vocal strength and music theory. The group sings at prayer services as well as performing in two formal concerts during the trimester.

Boys Choir: This elective focuses on the voice development of MS boys in a group. Exploring rhythm, timing, vocal dynamics, projection and breath control, boys learn to call and respond to military cadence chants and a cappella arrangements of songs and raps.

(Note: Seventh and eighth grade students enrolled in any trimester of choir are eligible to

prepare and audition for the Colorado All State Middle School Choir and should contact Mrs. Hamilton-Griggs as soon as possible in the fall. Preparation begins before the end of the first trimester for choir students in any of the three trimesters of choir.)

Informal Performance-Music

Guitar Ensemble: This course is designed for advancing students who have previous guitar experience including the beginning guitar elective. Students learn and play songs together complementing one another to create full-bodied performances of classical guitar music. Informal performances occur during the school day.

Rock Band: This third trimester elective is open to students with intermediate skill playing guitar (electric or acoustic), bass, keyboard, brass instruments or drums. Basic understanding of music theory and the capacity to read notes are recommended skills. The student enrolling in the class provides his/her own instrument with the exception of keyboard and drum set, which is provided by SMA. Vocal musicians with musical performance experience are welcome to enroll as well.

No Performance-Music

Beginning Guitar: The guitar is introduced to students who have had little or no experience with the guitar. The fundamentals of music are presented as well as basic note reading and music notation. Students are taught basic guitar techniques such as strumming, note reading, tablature, chording, and melodic playing, and they are introduced to music-recording software. Textbook selections are learned from a textbook, pop binder, and Internet.

Advanced Guitar: This course is designed for advancing students who have previous guitar experience including the beginning guitar elective. Students will be expected to complete more advanced textbook selections, more difficult popular song samples, and to learn new techniques such as finger picking and improvising. Students will have the opportunity to record their own songs using the computer-recording stations.

Emerging Musicians Option

Orchestra Option: This elective offers the opportunity to start at the beginning to learn violin, viola, cello, or bass, or to refresh your skill. No previous experience is required. You will learn to read music and play the instrument in a small group or individually allowing the chance to join SMA's full Middle School orchestra.

Band Option: This class is offered for those students who have never played a band instrument or need a refresher on their current band instrument. Instrument choices include: flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone, baritone horn and percussion. Students will receive individual and small group instruction with the choice to perhaps join the Concert Band.

THEATRE AND DANCE

Drama/Theatre: The one-trimester drama classes explore improvisational exercises, acting techniques and voice-and-body awareness. Each trimester culminates with a mid-day drama production. The actors employ original scripts developed from everyday experiences, movies or literature or they perform classical theatre depending on the make-up of the class.

Musical Theatre: Musical theatre teaches vocal technique, dance styles, acting elements and technical theatre such as lighting and sound, and is appropriately designed for boys and girls. The end product is a short piece of musical theatre delivered informally during the school day.

Dance: Students learn to create, perform, respond and connect the dance experience to other contexts of meaning and knowledge. They are exposed to movement vocabulary from different historical and cultural dance genres. Each unit is taught and experienced through the dance elective website that includes photographs, YouTube videos and descriptions of the genres.

VISUAL AND DESIGN ART

Explorations in Art: Visual arts provides students with opportunities to explore color, form and shape with a variety of art media and processes that include painting, drawing, printmaking, and working with clay. Students are exposed to art history and cutting-edge art movements in the context of their own artistic creations.

Explorations in Art – Wheel Throwing Option: Wheel throwing is limited to six students each in the second trimester fourth and tenth period *Explorations in Art* classes. The six students will each spend two weeks on the pottery wheel. During the remaining weeks, the student will engage in the regular, full-class projects. Students choosing this option must commit to an extended class time for their two weeks of wheel throwing. Check either wheel throwing option 4th or wheel throwing option 10th.

3D and Digital Design: Students employ a variety of materials to design and construct three-dimensional art forms. Digital tools enhance the creative process and product. iPad technology, dslr camera platforms and digital design apps with green screen and lighting technique are a few of the tools.

Patterns of the Past: Students enter the fascinating world of paleontology to learn about dinosaurs as small as chickens, flying reptiles as big as airplanes and elephants that lived in back yards. They put together bone puzzles, sculpt clay sabre tooth cats, interpret ancient animal tracks and make fossil beds out of Plaster of Paris.

Publications: For seventh and eighth grade students only, publications class designs the student yearbook and creates an annual year-in-review video. Skills learned include page design, aesthetics and layout and how to optimally shoot and edit photos.

Robotic Design: This trimester elective offers hands on Lego creations and challenges with brand new EV3 *Mindstorm* technology. The experience seeks to challenge and inspire innovative designs in a fun and encouraging environment. Students develop engineering and programming skills and enter into friendly competitions.

WRITING

Creative Writing: Students explore different genres of writing with the main goal of inspiring ideas and writing original pieces. This course includes writing exercises to spark creativity. Students write every day in class, and have the opportunity to write fiction, mystery, poetry, fantasy and even horror stories.

CULTURE

Chinese Cultural Explorations: Under the lead of Dr. Chen, the high school Chinese language teacher, students explore the rich cultural world of China, including music, art, history, food and basic language sounds and words. The fascinating history and contemporary influence of China offers students an engaging and fun elective, as well as one that expands their perspective and understanding of the world.