

WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Course Overviews for Grade Six

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Humanities (World History and Geography) – Grade 6

(This course is offered in English, French and Spanish—see Languages for details.)

Course Overview

This interdisciplinary course (focused on world history and geography) aims to enable students, through learning about the fundamental concepts of *time and space*, *cause and consequence*, *continuity and change*, and *similarity and difference*, to:

- develop the skills necessary for the effective study of history and geography
- discover an interest and enjoyment in learning about the past and making connections with the present
- develop the realization that there are many different interpretations of the past
- explore the earth, its inhabitants and the interaction of people with their environment
- organize their spatial knowledge at local, regional, national and global levels, in a world where information comes from a variety of sources
- value and enjoy the study of geography in an increasingly interdependent world

Information literacy skills are woven into each unit and support the overall aims of the course.

Content / Units of Study

The curriculum covers the Mediterranean world (Greece and Rome), India and China during the classical period (500 B.C.E. - 500 C.E.). The focus areas are:

- Greece: Crete; Mycenae; Homer; Athens; Sparta; Persian Wars; Periclean Athens; Alexander (with a related geography exploration of island formations featuring a comparison study of Oceania)
- Rome: Legends of the founding of Rome; the Roman republic; Pax Romana; the rise and growth of Christianity
- China: Ancient Chinese dynasties from the Shang to the Han; Confucius and other philosophers; ancient Chinese inventions; geography of Asia; the Silk Road
- India: Indus Valley civilization; Aryans; the caste system; Buddhism; Mauryas; Guptas; culture under the Guptas.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the MS Humanities Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

English (Language A) – Grade 6

Course Overview

The overarching questions for this course are:

- How can we foster a love of reading for enjoyment and understanding?
- How do reading and analyzing literature help me to understand myself and the world around me?
- What does it mean to communicate effectively in written and spoken form?
- How can we build a classroom environment that supports everyone's desire to learn?

Our focus is on developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Assignments range from formal essays to journal writing, from dramatic performance to oral interpretation, and from informal class discussions to formal presentations.

The overriding theme for grade six is *Identity*.

Content / Units of Study

Literature—As we make our way through the various genres of literature, we work on making and finding meaning of the themes, ideas, and messages presented by the author. We go beyond plot recall and discuss character motivations, effect of the author's style on the story, and purpose of the story. In addition, we work on vocabulary development and application.

Written Communication—We do various types of writing in and out of class. Using the writing process, we work on making writing clear, coherent, and accurate.

Oral Communication—Through class discussions and oral presentations, we learn to effectively present our interpretations of literature in spoken form.

Grammar—The study of grammar comes from the reading and writing we do.

The literary texts for the year include:

The Giver by Lois Lowry

The Other Side of the Sky by Farah Ahmed

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

Various short stories

Selected Poetry

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

The MS English Department uses three criteria to assess major assignments: Content, Organization, and Style and Language. Students receive all relevant rubrics in advance. Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

The final grade is based on the student's results in reading, writing, speaking and listening activities, along with class participation and effort. The following weighting is used to determine the final grade: 70 percent for major assignments; 15 percent for homework, including quizzes; and 15 percent for class participation.

Mathematics – Grade 6

Course Overview

This course aims to:

- extend and strengthen students' mathematics skills with an emphasis on mental agility and accuracy when working with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percentages
- extend students' ability to interpret and understand the physical world in mathematical terms
- build students' confidence in and enjoyment of mathematics

Content / Units of Study

Topics explored over the course of the year include:

Number Theory: Students will study commutative, associative and distributive properties. They will also discover the uses and applications of prime-factorization, least common multiples, and greatest common factors.

Arithmetic: Students will review and extend their knowledge of and fluency with whole numbers, decimals, fractions, and the use of percentages.

Pre-Algebra: Students will identify, communicate and extend patterns. In addition to describing patterns with words and tables, they will also begin to formally communicate patterns through writing basic algebraic expressions.

Geometry: Students will study geometrical vocabulary and theory through investigations in area and perimeter of 2-dimensional shapes.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the MS Mathematics Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Students are expected to complete their homework every day; time is devoted in each class to reviewing, checking and discussing homework. Completing homework conscientiously is very important for success in math class.

Tests are given at the end of each topic or chapter. They are always announced well in advance and coordinated with other classes. Some chapters contain so much material that units may be broken into smaller sections for studying and testing.

Integrated Science – Grade 6

Course Overview

Students will be introduced to laboratory techniques and will develop safe practices and confidence to work independently on practical projects.

Specifically, students will:

- learn to appreciate science and its place in a technological world
- be able to carry out simple experiments
- make observations
- collect data
- make simple deductions from findings
- be encouraged to use deductive reasoning to solve scientific problems

Content / Units of Study

This is the first year of a two-year course introducing the study of science as an integrated body rather than separate subjects. The course is roughly divided into seven units:

Safety and Basic Lab Skills	Learning terminology, dissolving, separating techniques
Measurement	Use of the metric system, measuring instruments' usage, accuracy including a lab report project on 'pendulums'
Forces and Movement	Gravity, friction, static electricity, magnetism, support and movement in the human skeleton
Particles	Kinetic theory of matter, atoms, molecules, Periodic Table including a research project
Acids and Alkalis	Lab and household chemicals, universal indicator, neutralization, salts, pH scale
Classification	Collecting, organizing, representation of data using keys
Structure of Cells	Study of plant and animal cells

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the MS Science Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Languages – Grade 6

Students entering grade 6 from the Primary School, will take their Humanities course in the target language (French or Spanish) and will take French or Spanish A. Students coming from another school will be placed in the language course based on their proficiency level.

The language program in grade 6 focuses on written and oral communication. The more advanced courses, intended for native and near-native speakers, put emphasis on reading and interpreting literature in the target language. Enrichment activities enhance the academic program throughout the year.

There are language options in the elective block as well. Students in the Advanced program may take Spanish or French Enrichment, which in grade 6 focuses on practice of the language and an exploration of topics of interest to the students, or they may take **Chinese** as an **additional language**. If they begin Chinese in grade 6, while they continue their study of Spanish or French in grades 6-12, they would be eligible to take Chinese B in the IB Diploma Program starting in Grade 11.

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the MS World Languages Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

GRADE 6 LANGUAGE OPTIONS OVERVIEW		
<i>Target Second Language</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Other Language Options</i>
French A-Advanced for advanced and native speakers 5 periods	in French 5 periods	Students can opt for French Enrichment for further exposure to the language and Francophone cultures, or they may take beginning Chinese.
French B-Foundation for beginners 5 periods	in English 5 periods	Students may take beginning Chinese in the elective block.
Spanish A-Advanced for advanced and native speakers 5 periods	in Spanish 5 periods	Students can opt for Spanish Enrichment for further exposure to the language and Spanish-speaking cultures, or they may take beginning Chinese.
Spanish B-Foundation for beginners 5 periods	in English 5 periods	Students may take beginning Chinese in the elective block.
<i>Target Third Language</i>	<i>Humanities</i>	<i>Note</i>
Chinese B-Foundation for beginners 5 periods	in English or target second language, depending on French or Spanish placement 5 periods	Students must also be enrolled in either French or Spanish. Chinese B is taken in the elective block.

Visual Arts – Grade 6

Course Overview / Content

The Visual Arts program in grade 6 is organized around three major emphases:

Knowledge and Understanding

Visual Expression: In grade 6 the emphasis is on *Approaches to Learning* and the elements of design (line, color, composition, etc.). Individual artists and art history examples are discussed as they relate to each unit. Students consider how to best approach each assignment while keeping the end result in mind. Through the use of small scale models, sketches and experiments, students will make informed decisions about their work.

Application

Technique: Early in the year we focus on pattern. The students work in small groups and individually to develop a pattern of sound, which they then represent in visual form. From there students explore other elements of design through the use of printmaking, rubbings, graphite, pens, markers, sun squares, oil pastels and paints. Throughout the year the concept of composition is investigated through the use of basic elements of design.

Reflection and Evaluation

Oral Presentation: Students are encouraged to consider why they make the aesthetic choices they make in regard to the use of compositional elements, line quality, etc. Through repeated use of art terminology, students are able to explain their work in an informed manner.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Visual Arts and Design Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Teachers and students use grading rubrics and written reflections to assess work at the end of each unit.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Vocal Music – Grades 6-8

Course Overview

Vocal Music provides students with the opportunity to learn about the societal, historical, aesthetic, and cultural importance of music, its development and its growth. Additionally, the course strives to give students a working ability with musical language, its symbolism and terminology, as well as an opportunity to learn in a relaxed studio atmosphere where the skills of musicianship are developed.

Aims of the course are to:

- instill in each student an understanding of and appreciation for music that will enable the student to be lifelong participants in music
- encourage performance in choral presentations, original compositions, movement, musical theatre, and related activities so that each child develops to his or her own potential and ability

Content / Units of Study

Units of study will introduce new concepts, musical genres, and performance and production opportunities. Students will also engage in composition and choreography. The units of study include singing technique; music theory; and listening and analysis.

The strands or fundamental elements in this course are:

- performance literacy and repertoire
- reading, notating, and performing music, music appreciation, and composition/basic music theory
- singing and performing together and alone in a choir, and as soloist
- appreciation of the historical, societal, aesthetic, and cultural value of music
- music composition and theory, including the creation and design of music, from both a creative and learned process; also encompasses composition, arrangement, research, and interpretation of music and musical systems
- musical theatre – the process of learning, creating and performing theatre

There are plans to have students work with advanced Digital Music Technology.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Performing Arts Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Instrumental Music – Grades 6-8

Course Overview

The aim of Instrumental Music is to instill in each student an understanding and appreciation of music that will enable him or her to be a lifelong participant in music. The course provides all students an opportunity to express themselves musically on a chosen instrument for serious music study and recreational playing, developing music reading and playing skills and allowing for a variety of instrumental ensemble experiences.

Content / Units of Study

Over the course of the three years of Instrumental Music, students will:

- learn and apply proper playing techniques on chosen instrument
- read and play a variety of music in a progression that exposes them to more complex musical concepts, including a wider playing range in different key signatures, and more complex rhythmic patterns and meters, form, dynamics, stylistic ornaments and interpretation
- play major, minor and chromatic scales and arpeggios
- read and play independent parts as members of an ensemble
- sight read
- identify composers and their historical era
- identify historical music eras and various styles
- prepare for winter and spring concerts

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Performing Arts Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Students are formally assessed on their preparation for class, their progress in playing proficiency, various homework and project assignments, class participation, performance exams, quizzes on theory and history, and concerts.

Physical Education/Health – Grades 6-8

Course Overview

Students in grades 6-8 take three hours of Physical Education and one of Health per 8-day cycle.

The primary focus of Physical Education is to provide as much physical activity for the students as is possible in the time we have. Students take part in developmentally appropriate activities to enhance physical development and skill development. Included are activities that aid in the development of gross motor movements as well as fine motor movements, improving agility and coordination.

The student's social development is a critical part of the program. Students are intentionally placed in situations to help them develop their social skills such as active listening, appropriate communication, non-verbal communication, and developing appropriate relationships with their peers as well as adults. Students are provided the opportunity to develop problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, and coping skills.

The Health program deals with a broad spectrum of important topics in an integrated and holistic way. The ultimate goal is to facilitate the development of healthy attitudes and increase students' knowledge of critical issues they will face as adolescents.

Course Content / Units of Study

In PE, students may have the opportunity to participate in the following units while at WIS. These units may not be offered each year due to facilities availability and weather constraints. They include: Various games, Badminton, Basketball, Flag Football, Soccer, Volleyball, Team Handball, Track and Field, Weight Lifting, Physical Education and Technology, Nutrition, Hydration, Hygiene, Injury Prevention, Conditioning, Self Defense, and Yoga.

In Health, topics covered will include but not be limited to relationships and social intelligence, self-awareness, health and wellness, diet and nutrition, digital citizenship, and diversity.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Physical Education/Health Department are used in evaluating major assignments. Students in Health receive a pass/fail grade.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.

Explanation of Elective Courses – Grade 6

In grade 6 students have one elective course block and can choose from the following selection: Chinese (year-long; see Languages on page 5), French or Spanish Enrichment (year-long; see Languages on page 5), Design Technology (one semester), Digital Media Workshop (one semester), or Building Your Brain Power (one semester).

Design Technology – Grades 6-8

Course Overview

Students in grades 6-8 may take Design Technology for one semester as an elective option. Students undertake a variety of challenges and projects, which involve some or all of the five phases of the design cycle: Investigate a problem, design a solution or a product, plan the steps through which that solution will be created, create the product/solution, and then evaluate the entire process.

These challenges and projects are specially set so as to encourage the student to use and extend knowledge acquired in science, math, and other courses. While working through the challenges and projects, students learn a variety of techniques, which enable them to work confidently with a wide variety of materials.

Content / Units of Study

In grade 6 the emphasis is on both working cooperatively with others and working individually in order to meet the challenges of the various projects. Students will design, plan, and construct a balloon-powered vehicle, which will be tested on how far and how straight it goes. They will also form teams in order to design and build a toothpick bridge, which must span a certain distance and be able to hold a specific weight.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Visual Arts and Design Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Students are often assessed formatively in terms of their “work in progress.” They are graded primarily on the quality of their work during the design process, as well as how productively, efficiently and safely they work in class, and how well their product performs up to the specifications of a particular project.

Most projects culminate with self-assessment, allowing students to reflect on what went well with the design/construction process and what did not.

Digital Media Workshop – Grade 6

Course Overview

As an introduction to storytelling with media, featuring digital media tools and techniques, this hands-on course will have students create and publish their own digital media projects. They will discuss the following questions throughout the course: *What is the purpose of media in our society? How can the media we use contribute to the stories we tell?* They will use the following tools: photography, video, audio, blogging, design and coding/programming. Students will use a combination of digital tools in the planning and creation of projects with an emphasis on creative storytelling.

Content / Units of Study

In grade 6 students will:

- be introduced to blogs, digital photography, and audio recording and editing
- study how technology has developed over time
- learn the fundamentals of digital filmmaking and editing
- hone digital media presentation skills
- explore the work of artists and media makers across disciplines
- practice the design cycle with regular feedback and opportunities for revision

Each unit will feature a project, giving students the opportunity to build an electronic portfolio of their work.

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the Visual Arts & Design Department are used in evaluating major assignments.

Students are often assessed formatively on their “work in progress.” They are graded primarily on the quality of their work during the design process, as well as how productively, efficiently and cooperatively they work in class, and on how well their product performs up to the specifications of a particular project.

Most projects culminate with self-assessment, allowing students to reflect on what went well with the design process and what did not.

Building Your Brain Power - Grades 6-7 *(New course in 2016-17)*

Course Overview

Students in grades 6 and 7 may take Building your Brain Power for one semester to strengthen their organization and study skills. Using particular note-taking, writing, and reading comprehension strategies, as well as techniques for taking tests and breaking down big projects and tasks, students will focus on how they learn best and what tools they can use to support work in their content area classes. Emphasis will also be on learning about metacognition, neuroscience, and the function of the brain.

Content/Units of Study

In grade 6, students will explore the following topics:

- The Brain and the Nervous System
- Learning and Memory
- Learning about learning – Metacognition - Your learning strengths – How to be a self-aware student
- Organization and Study Skills – What are they? What works best for you with different types of tasks?
- Facing challenges and a growth mindset

Texts used include:

Understanding your Brain: Lifting the Lid on What's Inside Your Head by Usborne

The Middle School Student's Guide to Study Skills by Susan Mulcaire

The Science Times Book of the Brain

The Owner's Manual for Driving your Adolescent Brain by JoAnn Deak & Terrance Deak

Assessment

A WIS semester grade includes a variety of assessment tasks, including projects, quizzes, tests and class participation. The numbers on the grading scale represent the following values: 7-Excellent, 6-Very Good, 5-Good, 4-Satisfactory, 3+ and below-Failing.

Assessment criteria developed by the teacher are used in evaluating major assignments.

Informal ongoing assessment takes place in every class.