



Palouse Prairie Charter School Middle School Course Guide

6th Grade Courses

6th Grade Earth Science Expedition (fall semester)

Sixth graders explore the history of our earth and important earth systems such as the movement of Earth, the movement of air and water, and the distribution of water. Students then learn about their water footprint and make connections between how people use water and its availability. Students explore the spinning of our earth to explain night and day, the seasons, and how the spinning earth affects climate and the water cycle. Students read about their water footprint and learn that their use of water is both direct and indirect. This awareness of water leads to learning about where Moscow's local water supply comes from and considering why conserving water is important. Students will help to create a compelling final product.

6th Grade Social Studies Expedition (spring semester)

This expedition is an in-depth study of economics and government. The first case study builds an understanding of basic economic principles, such as supply/demand and scarcity, free market, mixed, and planned economies, and GDP as a measure of economic growth. These concepts are taught both explicitly in various workshops, as well as through the events that arise during the Crew Economy economics simulator. In 'Crew Economy' the entire classroom is transformed into a functioning economy. In this exercise students will participate in a small-scale version of a free market, complete with a government, taxes, laws, and elections. Students are placed in a position where they are allowed to be critical of their economy and government, run for office and create change that is regulated by a system of checks and balances. The second case study focuses on civics and government. Students will gain an in-depth understanding of the US Constitution, while at the same time being able to offer an informed critique of this important historical document.

Mathematics I (full year)

All middle school mathematics courses are based on the Illustrative Mathematics (IM) Curriculum, which uses an inquiry-based approach to mastering state standards for both content and mathematical practices. With this approach, students engage in productive struggle through rich tasks with multiple strategies for finding solutions both independently and collaboratively, and teachers use student thinking to drive instruction. This emphasis on State Standards for Mathematical Practice allows students to develop strong skills in making their thinking visible, communicating their reasoning, and analyzing others' reasoning in the process of building procedural fluency. Students begin each year with an exploration of mathematical mindsets through the work of Jo Boaler, Professor of Mathematics Education at Stanford University.

In Mathematics I (sixth grade), students spend the year exploring several foundational mathematical themes that build on concepts from elementary grades and prepare students for high school



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mathematics. The first semester begins with geometry using area and surface area as a context to develop procedural fluency and spatial reasoning. Next, students study rates, ratios and percents by modeling relationships using tables, graphs and equations. Then students circle back to another unit on geometry using volume as a context to practice division with fractions. The semester ends with a unit on fluency with all four operations. In the spring semester students take a deep dive into expressions, equations, and inequalities to extend what they know about numbers to situations involving variables and algebraic inequalities. Then students develop fluency with rational number operations and explore the patterns and processes that help interpret negative numbers. Students end the year with a statistics project focused on variation and measures of center in data sets.

Writing (first and second quarters)

In this writing course, students embark on an exploration of mythology, unraveling its underlying purposes and elements. They begin by immersing themselves in Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief* while simultaneously examining the archetypal hero's journey. Through analysis of literary and informational texts, students cultivate strategies for acquiring and effectively utilizing academic vocabulary, and for discerning the interplay of themes and textual details. The first half of the course culminates in the creation of original fictional narratives. After delving into the realm of Greek mythology, the course transitions to *A Long Walk to Water*, a novel that chronicles the harrowing experiences of a young Sudanese boy named Salva Dut. By examining the themes of resilience, hope, and the enduring power of the human spirit, students gain an understanding of conflict and humanity's indomitable nature.

US History (A) (first quarter)

In this course students will carefully examine US and North American colonial history. This course begins with an overview of the Jamestown settlement, but quickly pivots to an analysis that uses Virginia Colony laws to make inferences on the culture of upper and lower classes. Following this unit of study, the course will shift into an analysis of the antebellum period and the major political and social factors that lead to the Civil War. Students will then examine both the rhetoric on both sides as well as an overview of major events of the war. To conclude our analysis of the Civil War, students will examine the final months, the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, and the collapse of the Confederate States of America. After this, students will move forward in time to analyze several primary sources regarding the Massacre at Wounded Knee. This mini-unit will kick off our final topic of study and guide us through post-civil war colonization efforts, expansionism, and laissez faire capitalism through the lens of both class and native peoples and their efforts to maintain sovereignty.

Science: Investigations (third and fourth quarters)

Students will delve into the fundamental building blocks of life, exploring atoms, molecules, and the Periodic Table to develop strong scientific communication skills. The curriculum will then transition to cellular biology and body systems, where students will investigate the intricacies of cell division, reproduction, genetics, and trait inheritance. Throughout the course, students will hone their critical thinking abilities by constructing comprehensive conceptual models.



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Wild Reading (third quarter)

In this literacy course, students actively engage in a rich literacy process known as 'Wild Reading.' This course gives students time in the day to discover and get excited about reading and sharing books. In addition to providing reading time, this course emphasizes explicit skills to instill lifelong reading habits.

Brain Science (second quarter)

Students explore the nervous system and learn about their brain's amazing development throughout adolescence. Learning focuses on important parts of the human brain, namely the prefrontal cortex, limbic system, neurons, and neurotransmitters. Students evaluate how their developing brain influences their actions, emotions, and learning during adolescence. In addition, students explore internet safety and evaluate how their developing brains may respond to the use of digital technology and social media.

Art (fourth quarter)

In this course, students will study and produce realistic acrylic paintings. Students will build on prior knowledge of color theory to create portraits that involve numerous layers to create realism. We will primarily focus on portraits of animals.

7th Grade Courses

7th Grade Humanities Expedition (fall semester)



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This expedition invites students to explore the interconnected realms of history, democracy, and the transformative power of storytelling. By examining the historical context of slavery, analyzing the impact of perspectives on history, and studying the foundations of democratic thinking, students will gain a deeper understanding of the world and the significance of individual action. Through a rich variety of texts, students will dig into the art of storytelling, exploring the concept of master narratives, analyzing personal narratives, and examining the role of literary devices in shaping meaning and impact. This course equips students with the tools to critically analyze historical events, evaluate moral complexities, and actively contribute to positive change in their communities, while also developing a profound appreciation for the enduring power of narratives.

7th Grade Life-Science Expedition - (spring semester)

This expedition uses the lens of soils to evaluate the health of ecosystems and food systems. We conduct research with our expert at the University of Idaho to evaluate soil and the impact of different variables on microbial activity in order to address middle school biology standards such as cycling, particularly nitrogen, carbon, and nutrient cycling. Students will build on previous student work and research on composting to further develop a compost system for our school.

Mathematics II: Pre-Algebra (full year)

All middle school mathematics courses are based on the Illustrative Mathematics (IM) Curriculum, which uses an inquiry-based approach to mastering state standards for both content and mathematical practices. With this approach, students engage in productive struggle through rich tasks with multiple strategies for finding solutions both independently and collaboratively, and teachers use student thinking to drive instruction. This emphasis on State Standards for Mathematical Practice allows students to develop strong skills in making their thinking visible, communicating their reasoning, and analyzing others' reasoning in the process of building procedural fluency. Students begin each year with an exploration of mathematical mindsets through the work of Jo Boaler, Professor of Mathematics Education at Stanford University.

In Mathematics II: Pre-Algebra (7th grade), students will extend many of the ideas introduced in Math I in preparation for Algebra in 8th grade. The first semester begins with a geometry unit to explore the concept of scale, which leads directly into the next unit focused on deepening understanding of proportional and linear relationships. Next, students use the geometry of circles as a context to enhance their reasoning about ratios. Then students apply their knowledge to contexts involving percent increase or decrease. The semester ends with a unit on extending understanding of operations with rational numbers. In the spring semester students take a deep dive into pre-algebra by working with expressions, linear equations, and inequalities. Then they extend their knowledge of two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving volume. Next students engage in a statistics unit focused on drawing inferences about populations based on samples. Students end the year by circling back to geometry to study rigid transformations, dilations, and symmetry.

Argumentative Writing (first quarter)



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In this class students will learn how to craft a compelling argument on a controversial issue. The key skills that students will develop in this class are how to craft a claim, how to assess the validity of different sources of information, and how to then incorporate those sources into a coherent argument. In addition, this course aims to help students develop a skill set for discussing or debating controversy with individuals with whom they might not agree. This is accomplished by using a style of argumentation that fully explores multiple perspectives before the author introduces their claim.

Science Investigation 2 - Physical Science (first quarter)

During this quarter, 7th graders learn about the fundamental laws of motion (Newtonian physics) and how to identify them in the real world. Students also learn about weight, mass, and the effects of gravity. Then students apply their understanding of motion to balanced and unbalanced forces and learn how to create simple force diagrams. Learning also focuses on chemical and physical reactions, states of matter, and the relationship between temperature and pressure.

US History (B) (third quarter)

During this course students will examine US history between 1890 and 1950. To begin, we will study America's 'Gilded Age,' by looking at the major economic drivers of the era as well as the impact on diverse peoples. Following this unit, students will temporarily study European history during the same era and ultimately discover the political origins of the first world war. This analysis will wrap back around to how the US became involved in the war, and the global impact of US policy post-war.

Marine Biology (second quarter)

During this course students will engage in three labs designed to build skills around data analysis. The labs will be on coral reefs, kelp forests, and killer whales. Each lab will involve context building to develop a scientific understanding of the systems involved, and then shift into data exploration and analysis. Labs will culminate in a policy section where students will be tasked with providing reasonable policy recommendations based on balancing the available science with the economics of the area in question.

Expository Writing (third quarter)

In this expository writing course, students will embark on a journey into the captivating world of fantasy literature. Through a close examination of *The Hobbit* as our anchor text, students will delve into the techniques employed by authors to convey meaning to their readers. By analyzing the literary devices woven into the narrative, students will gain a deeper appreciation for the craft of storytelling. Additionally, they will develop the skills necessary to compose a comprehensive literary analysis paper, demonstrating their ability to dissect and interpret the overarching themes that permeate the story.

US History (C) (fourth quarter)

This course picks up where US History B leaves off. The content explored will begin with Progressive Era movements and policies. Following this, students will learn about World War II, how the US became



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involved, a general overview of the different theaters of war, as well as the domestic impact of the war from diverse viewpoints.

Performing Arts (second quarter)

In this course students will learn the hilarious skill of improvised theater. Through this study we will examine how to establish a story arc and develop characters, a problem, the building of the problem, the climax of the story, and resolution of the story. This skill will be applied by both improvising scenes as well as writing scripted skits. In addition, students will also learn about how to incorporate music into these skits. The final project for this course is a half hour comedy special performed in small groups.

Geography (fourth quarter)

In this geography course, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of the world through the study of maps, the identification of countries, and in-depth case studies of specific cultures and regions. This course will equip students with a valuable foundation in geography, fostering a curiosity about the diverse cultures and landscapes that shape our planet.

8th Grade Courses



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8th Grade Social Studies Expedition (fall semester)

This expedition examines contemporary conflicts through a post-colonial lens. Specifically this expedition will carefully examine the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Students will develop a strong knowledge base around the historical roots of each conflict and will also gain a skill set in carefully examining complex geopolitical issues by analyzing multiple perspectives. Students will examine the contemporary conflict, focusing on the second intifada as a model to conduct perspectives analysis. Following this students will trace the roots of this conflict back to 19th century social darwinism, the 1897 Zionist Congress, WWI and the Balfour Declaration, the British mandate of Palestine, the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust, United Nations Resolution 181, and lastly the 1967 war. In addition, students will do a shallow dive into the historical roots of several other geopolitical conflicts to build a broader understanding of how international conflicts begin and end. These conflicts may include the Northern Ireland conflict, Apartheid in South Africa, the Congolese civil war, and the current situation in Afghanistan. The final product of this expedition typically involves a live performance of multi-voice poems to convey the complexity of each conflict.

8th Grade Humanities Expedition (spring semester)

In this exploration of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, students will delve into the play's rich themes, particularly focusing on the concept of control. By examining characters' motivations, strategies, and the consequences of their attempts to dominate, students will gain a deeper understanding of human behavior. Through case studies, students will explore the authorship of Shakespeare, analyze adaptations, and trace the play's connection to Greek mythology. Finally, they will tap into their creativity by crafting a character confessional, stepping into the shoes of a character and exploring their inner world.

Mathematics III: Algebra 1 (full year)

All middle school mathematics courses are based on the Illustrative Mathematics (IM) Curriculum, which uses an inquiry-based approach to mastering state standards for both content and mathematical practices. With this approach, students engage in productive struggle through rich tasks with multiple strategies for finding solutions both independently and collaboratively, and teachers use student thinking to drive instruction. This emphasis on State Standards for Mathematical Practice allows students to develop strong skills in making their thinking visible, communicating their reasoning, and analyzing others' reasoning in the process of building procedural fluency. Students begin each year with an exploration of mathematical mindsets through the work of Jo Boaler, Professor of Mathematics Education at Stanford University.

In Math III, all students will have the opportunity to take a high-school-level Algebra 1 class that extends the ideas of eighth-grade math to the topics of a typical Algebra 1 class. Instructional time will focus on four critical areas: (1) formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, including modeling an association in bivariate data with a linear equation, and solving linear equations and systems of linear equations; (2) grasping the concept of a function and using functions to describe quantitative relationships that are both linear, nonlinear and exponential; (3) analyzing two- and three-dimensional



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space and figures using distance, angle, similarity, and congruence, and understanding and applying the Pythagorean Theorem; (4) developing a rich understanding of quadratics. Students will apply their understanding of systems of equations to answer complex mathematical questions using modeling and analyzing bivariate data.

8th Grade Energy Science (fall semester)

This 8th-Grade science class focuses on physical science standards through the lens of energy. The course begins with building background knowledge and learning about atomic models, ions, isotopes, and nuclear reactions. Students learn how to classify energy, examine differences between potential and kinetic energy, and explore the electromagnetic spectrum and its connection to daily life. The class also explores the fundamentals of wave properties, analog vs digital technologies, and electrical circuitry. Students also evaluate energy sources in the United States and the role of energy in contributing carbon to the atmosphere.

Passages/Health (spring semester)

Passages represent a student passing from one level to the next, AND the presentation serves as a rite of passage. In the final quarter of their 8th-grade year, students are asked to review their portfolio of middle school work and create a Passage Portfolio that includes honest reflections of their growth, aspirations, and evidence of learning from their coursework at Palouse Prairie School. The Passage Portfolio will be used in their passage presentation, which is both a celebration of learning and an opportunity for each student to show their best work to a panel of community leaders. The presentation is a defense of their preparation and readiness for high school. Successful completion of the portfolio and public presentation are required for graduation from Palouse Prairie School. Students will craft a final word to share at their graduation ceremony.

During the first half of the semester (third quarter), students will learn about health topics related to human sexuality including reproduction, healthy relationships, and personal safety. A separate curriculum night will be hosted for families in January.

World History A (first quarter)

This class focuses on ancient civilizations. The course begins by considering the vocabulary of civilization and quickly shifts into a workshop on the Neolithic Revolution. Following this work students will study ancient China, learning about the dynastic cycle, and the cultural and political mechanisms that kept the dynastic cycle working. Students will also learn about Emperor Shi Haundi and have a debate about whether or not he improved China. Students then move into more recent Chinese history, learning about the Opium Wars and discussing how different understandings of how countries should treat each other led to conflict. Students will then learn about the Mongol Empire, and the ways in which the Mongols both benefited and harmed those that they conquered.



World History B (third quarter)

This class begins by answering a fundamental question: Why did America drop atomic bombs on Japan? Students will answer this complex question after digging into a multi-perspective analysis of the various elements involved. Following this unit of study, students will focus on the history of cold-war era Latin America. Specifically, students will study the complexities that occurred in Guatemala and Cuba.

Narrative Writing (second quarter)

In this course, students will delve into the art of short story writing, exploring the techniques that keep readers captivated. By analyzing the works of established authors, students will gain insights into the development of engaging plots and the creation of suspenseful tension. They will also have the opportunity to practice their own writing skills, crafting their own short stories and receiving feedback from their peers. Through this immersive experience, students will develop a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling and refine their ability to craft compelling narratives.

Art (fourth quarter)

This art course will explore the fundamentals of illustration, guiding students in developing their artistic skills. Through a variety of techniques, students will learn to create compelling visual representations. They will also delve into the intricacies of human anatomy, studying the proportions and details that contribute to realistic depictions. To enhance their understanding of three-dimensional form, students will engage in a hands-on project. This course will foster creativity, technical proficiency, and an appreciation for the visual arts.

Mixed Grade Courses

Crew (full year)



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During this class students engage in a culture-building meeting and activities to develop relational character and habits of scholarship. This meeting and activities focus on our school's CREW traits, Habits of Scholarship, and EL Design Principles.

Physical Education: field sports (first and fourth quarter)

This PE course provides students with an opportunity to participate in a variety of sports that develop specific skills around throwing, catching, tactics, overall fitness, and collaboration. Typical games include ultimate frisbee, handball, flag football, soccer, and a variety of invasion style games.

Indoor Physical Education (year long, students enroll one quarter at a time)

This course will incorporate a variety of traditional sports, games, and activities that will keep students active. Each day starts with a warm up activity or game that leads into the activity for the day. Over the course of the quarter students will get the chance to play soccer, volleyball, frisbee, capture the flag, bowling and much more!

Fitness Physical Education (first and fourth quarter)

This course emphasizes daily healthy living practices by getting students out and moving. Typical activities in this class include walking, running, yoga, and various games and movement activities designed to prompt physical and mental wellness.

Rock Climbing (second, third, fourth quarter)

In this course students will learn to climb and gain knowledge and skills to minimize risk in the outdoors. Students will gain insight and skills in rock climbing, Leave No Trace, navigation and map reading, knots, trip preparation/planning, and basic first aid.

Wellness (second and third quarter)

Wellness class will largely take place indoors. This course will emphasize yoga as a means of developing core body strength and balance, nutritional lessons designed to help students develop healthy diets, and mindfulness practices to help students become more self aware.

Music (quarterly)

This course is taught by the wonderful Jodi Fisher! Students learn the basics of music theory as well as the joy of musical improvisation through 'jamming.'