

# Bala Cynwyd Middle School Program Guide



**2018-2019**



*A* NATIONAL SCHOOL  
*of*  
EXCELLENCE

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# Bala Cynwyd Middle School Program Guide 2018 – 2019

Welcome to Bala Cynwyd Middle School, a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. This guide is designed to help you and your child plan their academic programming more effectively at our school. The guide is set up chronologically, according to grade and includes descriptions of all our courses as well as our specialized programs. Please take a moment to review this information prior to completing your child’s course registration form.

Should you have any questions about the information in this guide or if you need help in planning your course of study, please contact your child’s school counselor at 610-645-1488. Thank you.

## Grading Scale

Grades are to be an evaluation of a student’s academic work. Student discipline shall have no effect on grades. Student achievement will be reported as a letter grade.

Numeric Average	Alpha Grade	Final Grades
97-100	A+	<p>A final year-long grade is issued in every class. The numeric averages of each of the four quarters are totaled and divided by four, which results in a final grade. In summary, each quarter equates to 25% of a student’s final grade. Also, there is a statistical “floor” of 50% for each of the first two quarters. Students who receive a grade of “F” for the final yearly grade in a course will be expected to re-take the course in Summer School. This is reflected in School Board Policy Number 213.</p>
93-96	A	
90-92	A-	
87-89	B+	
83-86	B	
80-82	B-	
77-79	C+	
73-76	C	
70-72	C-	
67-69	D+	
63-66	D	
60-63	D-	
< 60	F	
> 86.5	O – Outstanding	
64.5-86.4	S – Satisfactory	
< 64.5	U - Unsatisfactory	

## **Scholastic Honors**

To recognize those students who have accomplished a high standard of academic performance, the following “Scholastic Honors” system has been established. Students have the opportunity to earn Honor Roll status every marking period as recognition will be given each quarterly grading period to students who meet the honor roll criteria. A student that earns any grade below a B in any subject has not met the honor roll criteria.

Two-Tiered Honor Roll

- 1) **First Honor Roll** – Awarded to those students who have earned report card grades of all A and O.
- 2) **Second Honor Roll** – Awarded to those students who have earned report card grades of all A, B+, B, O, or S.

Sequence of Courses, Grades 6 – 9

Subject	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Language Arts/ English or Reading	Language Arts/ Reading and Writing	English Reading	English Reading	English I, Honors English I
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
Science	Earth Science	Biology	Physical Science	Biology, Honors Biology
Social Studies	Ancient Civilizations	United States Social Studies, Part I	United States Social Studies, Part II	Global Studies 1, Honors Global Studies 1
World Language or Reading	French or Spanish	French, Spanish, Latin, or Reading	French, Spanish, Latin, or Reading	French, Spanish, Latin
Computers, Arts, Family Consumer Science, Technology Engineering in Education	Students will be exposed to each of these courses during their stay at Bala Cynwyd Middle School	Students will be exposed to each of these courses during their stay at Bala Cynwyd Middle School	Students will be exposed to each of these courses during their stay at Bala Cynwyd Middle School	Elective
Physical Education/ Health	Physical Education	Physical Education, Health	Physical Education, Health	Physical Education
	General Music or Band, Orchestra, Chorus	General Music or Band, Orchestra, Chorus	General Music or Band, Orchestra, Chorus	Elective

## Language Arts and English

### **Grade 6 – Language Arts: Reading and Writing**

Effective reading requires tools such as strategies, skills, and knowledge. Through experience and practice, students can develop the habits and abilities needed to become successful readers. In order to help students develop as readers and writers, the language arts program includes the following goals:

- Providing a skilled based program that emphasizes reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Exposing students to a variety of genres in reading as well as writing
- Creating an environment that motivates and involves students in their reading and writing
- Presenting lessons that deepen students’ knowledge of how specific reading strategies work and can support their reading
- Supporting developing readers with frameworks that improve reading
- Teaching students how to utilize the writing process with a focus on specific domains: focus, organization, content, style and conventions
- Providing students with standardized test-taking strategies
- Differentiating instruction to support specific student needs

### **Grade 7 - English**

The seventh grade English program is designed to increase students' confidence and skills in reading and writing. Mechanics and grammar are taught within the context of writing and reading programs. Students read and react to different genres of literature (short story, novel, non-fiction, poetry and write on a variety of self-selected and assigned topics. Interdisciplinary projects also take place during the year. As an example, students read from a variety of historical novels related to the periods studied in Social Studies class.

### **Grade 8 - English**

The eighth grade English course encourages development of students' skills in all areas of language use: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Specifically, students study grammatical patterns in text, speculate about author purpose, and practice the writing process in several formats: persuasive, informative, expository, and creative writing assignments.

### **Reading**

The Middle School Reading Program provides students with intervention and support in small group settings. ***The needs of each student inform the delivery of instruction in the class.*** Criteria for placement include, but are not limited to, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), and the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE). Additionally, input from students’ classroom teachers is considered when placing students in the reading program. Reading classes are grouped as homogeneously as possible in order to intensively target students’ specific needs. A reading specialist teaches each section.

The core components of the program are comprehension, vocabulary and word analysis. While working on reading skills, the reading specialists strive to help students make connections between reading, responding to texts, speaking, and listening. Reading specialists expose students to a variety of texts and guide them in the use of strategies necessary for understanding each type of text. In addition, Achieve 3000, a web-based program, is used to further enrich the reading program. This instruction helps students to see different purposes and contexts for reading. The goal of the program is to provide students with reading skills, aligned with the Common Core and for learning in a variety of content areas.

Students are graded on their individual improvement in the following areas: comprehension, vocabulary development, word analysis, test-taking skills, classwork, and homework.

**Grade six** students will meet every day as a major subject in a small group setting. The class takes place during one of the two scheduled language arts reading and writing blocks and is taught by a reading specialist instead of the student's regular classroom teacher.

**Grade seven** students will meet every day as a major subject in a small group setting. The class takes place in lieu of a student's foreign language class.

**Grade eight** students will meet every day as a major subject in a small group setting. The class takes place in lieu of a student's foreign language class.

## Mathematics

### **Math 6**

Aligned with the goals and objectives of the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards for Mathematics and the recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Math 6 is a grade-level course in which higher order thinking skills are taught through the content areas of the number system, ratios and proportional relationships, geometry, expressions and equations, and statistics and probability. Problem solving, communication and reasoning are pervasive themes through all content areas. Students begin the transition from concrete operations to abstract thinking through the development of problem solving strategies.

### **Pre-Algebra**

Pre-Algebra introduces higher order thinking skills that are built upon the foundation learned in Math 6 through the strands of number systems, rational number computation and estimation, probability, data analysis, algebraic thinking, geometry, measurement, ratio, proportion and percent. Problem solving, communication and reasoning are pervasive themes through all content areas. Technology is integrated as appropriate to the development of concepts and problem solving. This is a one-year course in Pre-Algebra.

### **Algebra I Part I**

This course builds upon the concepts introduced in Pre-Algebra. Topics studied include: linear equations, graphing and solving linear systems and inequalities, probability, statistics and data

analysis. Problem solving, communication, and reasoning continue to be pervasive themes through all content areas. All topics are taught from a symbolic, graphic, and numeric perspective. Technology is integrated as appropriate to the development of concepts and problem solving.

### **Algebra I (Full Year)**

This course covers a full year of algebra. The purpose of this course is for students to be able to understand the vocabulary of algebra and to gain a solid degree of fluency in this manner of expressing information. The ultimate goal is for students to be able to think symbolically, understand the meaning of an algebraic expression and an algebraic equation as well as the behavior of a graph or a set of numbers, and can reason logically with this information.

The major topics being studied in this course include: solving equations and simplifying expressions, linear relationships, systems of equations, inequalities, absolute value equations, irrational numbers and expressions, operations with monomials and polynomials, functions and data analysis

### **Geometry**

As a prerequisite, all students must have successfully completed the full year course – Algebra I. This course emphasizes the axiomatic development of Geometry. Fundamental ideas of Euclidean, coordinate algebraic and transformational geometries are developed and studied, within rich, real world experiences. Congruency, similarity, parallel and perpendicular line concepts, ratio and proportion, inscribed and circumscribed concepts, area and volume, circles, spheres, cylinders, pyramids, cones and triangle trigonometry, are topics covered in depth. Students will construct, interpret and justify proofs through the use of formal deductive and inductive reasoning.

### **Math Supplement - Grades 6, 7, and 8**

Math supplement is a general education class designed to support students in the area of mathematics; more specifically to address individual students' areas of need with regard to mathematical foundational skills. Prior student performance assessments as well as current curriculum assessments are used to determine eligibility for the course as well as to determine the areas of need to be addressed. The class is taught by a certified mathematics teacher and is normally scheduled during one of the four days of the cycle.

## **Science**

### **Grade 6 – Science**

The focus of sixth grade science is the processes that shape the Earth. Hands-on labs provide concrete experiential learning through which students apply scientific skills, scientific inquiry and scientific methodology. Investigations include plate tectonics, volcanoes, earthquakes, rocks and minerals, and weather.

During this course, students will examine and understand the relationship between Earth's interior and its features; identify the three major rock groups – igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic –

their characteristics and the processes by which they are formed; as well as examine the processes of water and weather in earth systems and demonstrate the cycling of water in and out of the atmosphere.

### **Grade 7 - Biology**

Seventh grade science is an introductory course in biology for students to begin to understand the living world around them. It provides students with an intensive overview of the diversity, variation, interaction, adaptation, and changes among living things.

Living science in seventh grade offers a hands-on, laboratory based approach to the inquiry method of learning. Students are given the opportunity to develop basic lab skills through investigation and experimentation. They are actively involved in research and a variety of presentations and projects.

During this course, students will demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method; investigate the needs and relationships of living things based on biotic and abiotic factors; analyze the components of cells and the processes that occur within them; explain the foundation of modern genetics; explore present day evolutionary theories; detail organisms found within each of the six kingdoms; and explore ecology as it is interwoven throughout life science.

### **Grade 8 - Physical Sciences**

Eighth grade science is an exploratory course involving opportunities to construct knowledge and develop skills through problem-solving, laboratory activities, projects, and inquiry-based learning.

During this course, students will understand concepts of physics, basic chemistry, and astronomy; develop and conduct experiments, critically analyze the process and results, and communicate their findings; apply technology in solving problems, and discuss applications of technology in society; critically analyze problems, and utilize the appropriate mathematical applications required to solve those problems; and recognize that science is data based, subject to revision, and an integral part of their lives.

## **Social Studies**

### **Grade 6 - Ancient Civilizations**

The social studies curriculum for sixth grade introduces students to the study of six of the world's ancient civilizations. In addition to opportunities for content-area integration, the global nature of the ancient civilizations curriculum, with its focus on key aspects of culture, affords students the chance to explore the development of many diverse cultures. By exploring how ancient people lived day-to-day, governed themselves and solved problems, students begin to see how the past informs our current way of life. While exploring the ancient world cultures in social studies, students learn skills that help them to gather, manipulate, and present information from multiple sources. Reading skills are integrated with the historical concepts through citations of textual evidence, vocabulary development within text, communication of conceptual ideas, and visual literacy. Writing and

research skills are integrated through the application of informative writing structures, the exploration of the process of research and inquiry, and the analysis of historical text. Throughout the year and during multiple units, these skills are practiced and honed.

#### **Grade 7 - U.S. Social Studies**

Seventh grade American social studies fosters an understanding of the development of the United States from its colonial foundations to the outbreak of the American Civil War. Drawing upon the other disciplines, the course seeks to establish a clear and intelligible appreciation of America's past.

#### **Grade 8 - U.S. Social Studies**

The eighth grade Social Studies program surveys American social studies chronologically from the mid-19th century through the early 20th century. Topics include: The Civil War, Reconstruction, government and the Constitution, the West, the Industrial Revolution and immigration, involvement in world affairs, World War I, and changing foreign policy, the struggle for civil rights, and America's role in an increasingly interdependent world. More contemporary topics are taught whenever possible to the extent that they relate to more distant social studies and help bring the past to life. A student centered approach to learning will offer students an opportunity to express opinions and involve themselves with social studies in many different ways, including: projects with technology, primary and secondary source investigations with a focus on the PA Core Standards, essay writing, debate, open dialogue, and simulations. Presenting social studies as a compelling story, the teachers help students appreciate the relevance of the past to their present and their future.

### **World Language**

#### **Grade 6 (FLES Bridge)**

Students will participate in the French or Spanish programs as a continuation of their elementary FLES program. They will meet for one period during a four-day cycle. Students will begin to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing through the use of ancillary materials and cultural activities.

#### **Grade 7**

While we encourage students to remain with the language they have studied through elementary school, students may indicate a preference to study Latin, French or Spanish in seventh grade. The language studied in seventh grade will continue in eighth grade.

Students who choose Latin will be studying the language for the first time. Students who move from French to Spanish or from Spanish to French will be mixed with students who have studied the language previously. The content learned in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum builds on the vocabulary and phrases learned in the FLES program. 7<sup>th</sup> grade will begin more formal instruction of the language that will focus on structure and communication.

### **French/Spanish**

The seventh grade curriculum allows students the opportunity to further develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills while broadening their understanding of the target cultures. Students will interact with the language on a daily basis through the use of text, audio, video, computer, music and games. Students will be evaluated based on their ability to interpret and produce language via skits, written assessment, conversations, reading comprehension, projects, daily homework, and class participation. Foreign language classes meet daily, reflecting an increase in frequency from the sixth grade program.

### **Latin**

Seventh grade Latin introduces the students to the fundamentals of Latin grammar and syntax while they read a continuous story about a Roman family. Latin vocabulary words, and their English derivatives, are a regular feature of each chapter. Being able to read original Latin is the ultimate goal of the program; yet along the way students learn to analyze and understand the English language with clarity and precision. Additionally, students study Mythology, Social studies, Engineering, daily life, and the Roman Republic. They discover the enormous influence the Romans have had on modern literature and civilization.

### **Grade 8**

Students continue their studies in French, Latin and Spanish during their eighth grade year. In modern language courses, students are expected to communicate primarily in the foreign language with a minimum of English while exploring the culture where the target language is spoken. Listening, reading and writing are also emphasized. Latin students continue to perfect their grammar and syntax skills, while reading stories in Latin. Roman culture, word derivatives and the mythology of heroes continue to be part of the curriculum.

## **Computers, Arts, Family Consumer Science, Technology & Engineering Education**

### **Computers**

The computer course is designed to provide an introduction to the exciting world of technology. Students will develop comprehensive skills using a variety of software and technological devices and be able to apply these skills to exciting interdisciplinary and “real life” projects! The students will learn keyboarding, word processing, spreadsheets, basic webpage construction, digital video and photo editing, programming and various computer science topics. Students will utilize design and problem solving skills to create digital projects that are truly innovative and cutting edge. This course is a challenging, exciting, and high tech experience that will provide the students with a solid foundation of technological skills that will be needed for their middle school years and beyond.

### **Technology & Engineering Education**

Technology is a fundamental part of today’s society. In today’s rapidly changing world, it is imperative that students develop an understanding of technology and the skills necessary to use, manage, and manipulate technology. Technology & Engineering Education strives to provide

students with a solid foundation upon which to build such technological literacy. Technology & Engineering Education at Bala Cynwyd Middle School begins with an examination of what technology means. We define technology as the process whereby human beings use tools, machines, materials, and knowledge to solve problems in order to satisfy needs and wants. Using this definition as a springboard, students then explore core concepts of technology such as; Eras of Technology, Areas of Technology, Exponential Growth, Impacts of Technology, and the Design and Problem Solving Method. After working through the core concepts, we move into the body of the course. During this phase, students split their time between two facilities – The Research and Development Lab and the Design and Prototyping Lab. Working both collaboratively and independently, students will use their problem solving skills to design and construct solutions to relevant, authentic, real-world problems. Students will have myriad opportunities to apply and reinforce their content knowledge within the framework of the design and problem solving process. The core Areas of Technology: Power and Energy, Biotechnology, Construction, Transportation, Manufacturing, and Communication will be addressed. Students will use a variety of tools, including but not limited to computers, hand tools, multimedia equipment, and power tools. Throughout the entire course, we stress the idea that Technology & Engineering Education does not simply equate to computers or woodshop but rather encompasses these things.

### **Art**

The art program advances the students' understanding and skills in drawing, painting, and three-dimensional form through a studio experience. Elements of design, principles of organization, art styles, art history, and art criticism are explored by the students as media skills and techniques refine and blossom creatively at this pivotal age. Sketch books and skill building art and writing activities are used extensively. The art program continues to provide experiences consistent with the interests and the intellectual, social and aesthetic maturity of the students. The course provides experience in enhancing artistic development, self-awareness and confidence in one's ability. By increasing their understanding of art heritage and recognizing artistic styles and achievements, the students grow in their awareness of the art world. Exploration of additional units may include interdisciplinary approaches and multi-cultural perspectives. Students who wish to continue in art at the high school level are encouraged and given guidance.

### **Family and Consumer Sciences**

The Family and Consumer Sciences program focuses on encouraging students to become responsible contributors to family and community. Family and peer relationships are examined, along with ways to become a better communicator. Students will gain nutrition awareness from the program after learning the benefits of good health and wellness. Students will learn the basics of cooking and baking, as well as the importance of safety and sanitation in the kitchen. The foods prepared in class are nutritious, as well as appealing to the teenage palate. Fabric care and repair, textile design and construction are another piece of the curriculum. In eighth grade, students will take part in a consumer education unit to gain self-awareness and personal management skills for the future.

## **Physical Education, Health**

### **Physical Education – 6th, 7th and 8th**

The Physical Education program at Bala Cynwyd Middle School is focused on maintaining and improving the fitness of all our students. Through carefully designed and coordinated lessons, the components of health and skill related fitness are assessed for each student. It is our goal for students to experience a (1) wide variety of activities, (2) enjoy their physical education experience, and (3) leave Bala Cynwyd with the knowledge and skills to incorporate fitness into everyday life.

### **Health**

The health education program at Bala Cynwyd Middle School is a coordinated, planned, and sequential curriculum in which each lesson builds upon the previous lesson. It is designed to influence positively the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of all our students. State and national standards are evaluated by using informal and formal assessments. The students are armed with the knowledge and skills to assist them in making healthy choices. Areas of study include decision making, nutrition, substance abuse, disease control and prevention, first aid, puberty, anatomy, relationships, dating, birth control, abstinence, pregnancy, labor childbirth, sexually transmitted diseases, drug use, stress management, nutrition, and eating disorders. It is our goal to empower the students with knowledge and skills to confidently live a healthy life style as they mature through their adolescent years. When examining their own health students will become aware of not only the physical component of health but also the mental/emotional and social side. By keeping these three areas in balance, students will be on a path toward living a healthy lifestyle.

## **Music**

### **General Music**

Areas of study include melody, harmony, meter, form and texture. Music in history is explored. Our textbook, Silver Burdett's Making Music, surveys myriad musical styles, cultures, genres and venues in an extraordinarily comprehensive manner. Lessons are accompanied by professionally produced digital recordings. Students who are not in chorus, band or orchestra take this General Music course.

### **Chorus**

Repertoire reflects a broad variety of styles. Emphases include individual vocal technique, breath control, head voice development and part singing. Unison, two and three-part music will be performed. The chorus curriculum also includes much of the General Music program described above.

## **Band**

Band is for all grade levels and open to all woodwind, brass and selected percussion players who have completed at least one year of lessons. Entrance is based on the recommendation of their former music teacher and the assessment by the middle school instrumental music teacher. Emphasis will be placed on improving technical skills and ensemble playing. Specific requirements must be met throughout the year to complete each quarter successfully. Group pullout lessons are required and scheduled on a rotating basis to avoid interference with any specific class. Full band meets as a scheduled class once per cycle. Representative literature of varying musical periods and styles is presented in progressive levels of difficulty throughout the year. Band is a year-long commitment; therefore, careful consideration should be made prior to registering for this course. Students will be expected to attend all performances scheduled throughout the year.

## **Orchestra**

Sixth Grade Orchestra is open to all sixth grade string players who have completed at least two years of lessons, sufficient music reading ability is necessary for success in 6<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra. Entrance is based on the recommendation of their former music teacher and the assessment by the middle school instrumental music teacher. Advanced woodwind, brass and percussion students are invited to audition to become a member of the orchestra. Representative literature of varying musical periods and styles is presented in progressive levels of difficulty throughout the year to prepare the students adequately for orchestral experiences outside of school. Specific requirements must be met throughout the year to complete each quarter successfully.

All string players will be expected to attend weekly group lessons that will rotate to avoid interference with the same class period. In addition, students will be expected to attend all performances scheduled throughout the year. Full orchestra meets once per cycle as a scheduled class. Orchestra is a year-long commitment; therefore, careful consideration should be made prior to registering for this course.

## **Senior Orchestra**

Senior Orchestra is a curricular extension of the orchestra school class that takes place during the school day. This group is open to all seventh and eighth grade string players who have reached a sufficient level of preparation to enable them to participate successfully. All woodwind, brass and percussion students must pass an audition in order to become a member of the orchestra. Representative literature of varying musical periods and styles is presented in progressive levels of difficulty throughout the year to prepare the students adequately for orchestral experiences outside of school. Specific requirements must be met throughout the year to complete each quarter successfully. All woodwind, brass and percussion students will be expected to attend one sectional every other week that will rotate to avoid interference with the same class period. In addition, full orchestra meets once per cycle as a scheduled class. Orchestra is a year-long commitment; therefore, careful consideration should be made prior to registering for this course.

## **Extracurricular Instrumental Music Ensembles**

### **Chamber Orchestra**

Chamber Orchestra is an advanced string orchestra. Any 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade student who is enrolled in orchestra may audition for Chamber Orchestra. Auditions take place in September. A limited number of students will be selected to maintain the desired instrumentation and balance of ensemble. Chamber Orchestra rehearses once a week before school. Because of the difficulty of the music, most Chamber Orchestra participants study privately.

### **Junior Jazz Band/Senior Jazz Band**

Any student who is enrolled in band or orchestra may audition for junior and senior jazz band. Auditions will take place in September. A limited number of students will be selected based on the accepted standard instrumentation. Junior Jazz Band and Senior Jazz Band rehearsals will be held before school on two days each week from 7:30 – 8:15 a.m. Members of either jazz band will be expected to attend all performances scheduled throughout the year. More information will be given out to interested students at the beginning of the school year.

### **Advanced Choir**

The Advanced Choir is a select choir for seventh and eighth grade students. Students may audition to be in advanced choir in September, or January. Advanced Choir meets during the LEARN period. Advanced Choir always meets as a full ensemble, so students are learning their music with multiple different parts at the same time. This choir is appropriate for seventh and eighth grade chorus members who love singing, and would like to learn challenging music. Advanced Choir performs at two school concerts per year.

## **Challenge**

In keeping with LMSD program goals, the Challenge (gifted education) program at Bala Cynwyd Middle School encompasses high level cognitive and affective concepts and processes extending beyond those provided within the regular education program. Through a combination of intellectual peer grouping, literature circles, and inclusion lessons, gifted students experience learning environments that incorporate metacognitive experiences to help them develop the following traits and skills: innovation, exploration, self-monitoring, creativity, planning, and decision-making. Students additionally extend their curricular learning, further developing critical and creative thinking skills through inquiry, independence, and academic risk taking.

### **Grade 6**

The sixth grade Challenge seminar is designed to help students stretch their minds outside their “comfort zone” by introducing advanced topics, issues, skills and/or ideas that extend and enrich generalizations, skills and content from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Students will engage in more sophisticated and advanced critical and divergent thought by applying Sandra Kaplan’s Depth and Complexity icons: details, patterns, trends, rules, language of discipline, ethics, unanswered questions, big ideas, multiple perspectives and relationships across disciplines and over time.

### **Grade 7**

The seventh grade Challenge program, “Philosophers and Thinkers,” presents literacy opportunities related to diverse philosophical areas, including war, censorship, persuasion, money, ethics, truth, justice, and environmental issues, among others. Students analyze, synthesize, and evaluate literary excerpts, compose within personal notebooks, sample art and music, produce artistic expressions of their ideas, and discuss topics candidly among intellectual peers. A rich adventure in critical reflection and intellectual investigation, with connections to regular classroom content as well as suggested extensions for independent investigation, the program addresses multiple intelligences as it fosters topical digressions leading to greater self-discovery.

### **Grade 8**

The eight grade Challenge seminar engages students in inquiry, analysis, and interpretation. During the year, students examine their own identities and choices as they rethink, reflect, and reason. Through a rigorous examination of literature, film, visual art, historical documents, and music, students look closely at issues of civil rights and social justice. Furthermore, students conduct independent inquiry projects and have opportunities to participate in special architecture and playwriting classes, which are co-taught with professionals in the respective fields.

## **LEARN**

All students are assigned to a LEARN class during each of their grade levels here at Bala Cynwyd. The LEARN teacher assigned also serves as their RALLY advisor. The LEARN period is typically scheduled at the end of the day.

Although the LEARN period is not a graded academic class, the time spent during LEARN is crucial to many students success while in middle school. A typical LEARN period allows students to use their time to begin working on assignments, visit teachers with questions, work with other students on group projects, organize their work, and make up missed work. Students may also be assigned by staff to specific classrooms.

## **RALLY LESSONS – Community Building at BCMS**

RALLY lessons occur 9-10 times a year in a students LEARN period. The lessons are structured to build a sense of community and understanding, as well as address issues that may come up during the course of the school year. Students will take part in several lessons based on the Olweus anti-bullying rules. We will not bully others-We will try to help students who are bullied-We will try to include students who are left out-and if we know someone is being bullied we will tell an adult we trust at school or at home. Other lessons are based on a variety of subject matter, some of which they choose through surveys including but not limited to: identity, diversity, service, and integrity.

Guest speakers and assemblies are often considered based on student feedback and discussions during RALLY lessons.

### **Interdisciplinary Programs**

There are three grade level and one combined 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade interdisciplinary programs offered at Bala Cynwyd Middle School. All programs require the completion of a student application. Because of the rigorous and challenging methods of the grade level programs, students are expected to be self-motivated, comfortable with independent and small group work, and well organized. Students are also expected to be working on or near grade level in all subject areas.

In order to ensure that all students' needs can be appropriately met, parents should consult with their child's team and give careful consideration to applying for these programs BEFORE the selection process is completed.

#### **Grade 6 - eVOLVE**

eVOLVE is a cross-curricular program for 6<sup>th</sup> graders. eVOLVE's mission is to empower students to explore the evolution of academic, societal, and personal topics through the acquisition and application of skills, experiential learning, guided investigations, and regular reflection. The ultimate goal of the eVOLVE program is to foster a confident sense of self as a capable lifelong learner. Each individual is a responsible member of a dynamic close community, enjoying and learning from each other.

The program parallels the 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum; however, it compacts the 6<sup>th</sup> grade's science and social studies curricular concepts into the first third of the school year. Throughout this time we alternate weeks between science and history. All three units of the year include inquiry projects that are highly structured with skill lessons, but open to student choice of topics. Language arts skills are taught and practiced throughout the year.

eVOLVE teachers visit each elementary school to introduce the program to the 5th graders, then present it again to interested students and parents at an evening Prospective Student & Parent Meeting in the eVOLVE classroom. Students are chosen by lottery from the pool of applicants. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Jamie Gaffga ([gaffgaj@lmsd.org](mailto:gaffgaj@lmsd.org)) at 610-645-1480 or by email.

#### **Grade 7 - Communiqué**

The Communiqué program teaches the same curriculum as found on all seventh grade teams but utilizes a block of time to integrate language arts, social studies, science, health, art, and music into the theme of communication. Communiqué provides students with hands-on experiences that emphasize critical thinking, using a variety of teaching modes to stimulate all students' learning styles. Project-based and content-driven videography, publishing, advertising, journalism, technology, and research are integrated into the program. Students will leave the Communiqué

classrooms (and may integrate with the other seventh grade teams) for math, foreign language, technology education, band, chorus, and orchestra instructions.

Students in the Communiqué program experience a rigorous, challenging curriculum with the benefits of flexible blocks of time, a small team with fewer teachers, connectedness to curriculum and classmates, and project-based learning with emphasis on critical thinking, group work, and personal management.

Communiqué students are chosen by lottery from the pool of applicants. . If you have any questions please contact Mrs. Messick ([messicm@lmsd.org](mailto:messicm@lmsd.org)) at 610-645-1480 or by e-mail.

### **Grade 8 - Voices of Change (VOC)**

Voices of Change (VOC) is an interdisciplinary program for eighth graders designed to promote deep understanding and learning. The program parallels the current eight grade curriculum; however, language arts, social studies, science, art and health are frequently integrated, which helps students see the interrelated nature of learning.

In this small classroom community, students are expected to take responsibility for their learning and actively participate in the group. They frequently are asked to work cooperatively with others and to reflect on themselves as members of the group. This experience, as a member of the learning community, helps students develop social skills, communication skills, healthy attitudes about learning, and academic self-confidence.

Students spend time outside the program for math, foreign language, physical education, LEARN, band, chorus, and orchestra. VOC students are chosen randomly by lottery from students who apply for the program. If you have any questions please contact Dr. Willis ([willisd@lmsd.org](mailto:willisd@lmsd.org)) or Mrs. Jill Knight ([knightj@lmsd.org](mailto:knightj@lmsd.org)). Applications will be made available via eBoard around the time of the meeting.

### **N.O.W. (New Options Work)**

N.O.W. (New Options Work) is a district wide, seventh and eighth grade alternative education learning community at Bala Cynwyd Middle School. NOW covers the same curriculum as the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teams. This student-centered program values a diversity of learning styles. With challenging academic standards, students of both grades take part in a thematic humanities curriculum, with interdisciplinary units, which emphasizes diversity and multiculturalism in the United States. Students are nominated for this program by counselors and teachers. The small class size and co-teaching allows for a personal learning experience, where the uniqueness of each student is valued and nourished.

### **EXCEL Program**

EXCEL is a highly individualized general education class based on the needs of students with an emphasis on reading and the development and improvement of skills across the curriculum. It is

designed to guide and support regular education students toward high achievement. It grows directly out of several of our District's Strategic Beliefs:

- All individuals can be successful learners.
- People learn in different ways and at different rates.
- Excellence demands sustained effort.
- High expectations yield high results. EXCEL is a regular education intervention.

Students will:

- Make connections among ideas and between texts, with a focus on textual evidence and non-fiction reading.
- Acquire and utilize grade appropriate organizational and study habits.
- Develop an understanding of their learning style and self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.

EXCEL support will be scheduled flexibly dependent upon individual needs. Students are identified for EXCEL based on standardized assessments, record review, and teacher and parent input. Students may be scheduled to receive instruction and support during specials or during major subjects. The EXCEL teacher will also communicate with parents and provide help and support to parents as needed. A school counselor will work with the EXCEL teacher to provide additional support and to extend the school-home connection. New students who enter the middle school during the school year will be assessed before they are scheduled for classes to determine if there is a need for EXCEL support.

## **Guidance Program**

### **School Guidance Curriculum:**

School counselors deliver the guidance curriculum to all students through classroom lessons. The lessons are based on ASCA Student Competencies.

6<sup>th</sup> Grade: Students learn about their personal *learning styles*

7<sup>th</sup> Grade: Students learn *resume building & sexual harassment prevention*

8<sup>th</sup> Grade: Students explore their *interests and careers & Annual Career Fair*

### **Our comprehensive school counseling program at BCMS will:**

- ◆ Be based on specified goals and developmental student competencies for grades 6-8
- ◆ Be planned and coordinated by school counseling staff with input from other school, parent, and community representatives
- ◆ Incorporate community resources
- ◆ Be evaluated and developed by using measurable data
- ◆ Actively involve counseling representatives to monitor students' outcomes and progress

### **Individual Student Planning:**

Transition Activities: All school counselors are involved in transition activities assisting students and families adjusting to BCMS and each subsequent grade level. Some transition activities include:

- ◆ Multiple visits to all three feeder elementary schools to meet with students
- ◆ Coordinating transition activities/tour for all three feeder schools
- ◆ Meeting with all sending and receiving school counselors to share vital student concerns

**Responsive Services:**

School counselors provide responsive services through brief individual school counseling, providing community resources, and implementing crisis response.

- ◆ Small Group Curriculum: Group Counseling is an excellent opportunity for students to gain personal insight, give and receive feedback from other students, and learn specific skills. The school counselors facilitate several groups as part of the School Counseling Program. Groups are developed based on student needs and interests.

**System Support:**

- ◆ Consultation: Our school counselors routinely consult with parents, staff, and administration to help students achieve academic and social / personal success in school.
- ◆ Advisory Council: We meet bi-annually with our advisory council comprised of parents, professional staff, and administrators to share information about our Program and receive feedback from our stakeholders.

**Youth Experiencing Success Summer Program**

A stimulating and thematic approach to learning will be the basis of this summer program, so that skills are strengthened as students are learning and involved with topics that are engaging and highly interesting. The overall goal of this program will be to strengthen and maintain students' reading, writing, and mathematical skills so that they can reach proficiency in these areas. Experienced teachers who currently teach in Lower Merion will teach in this program. Eligible sixth and seventh graders are selected and invited based upon their previous performance on PSSA reading and mathematics tests and/or other standardized assessments, along with a review of their individual achievement during the school year