

# Middle School Curriculum Guide 2011-2012

## TVT Middle School Academic Program and Curriculum Philosophy

The Middle School curriculum is arranged around grade-level themes and interdisciplinary projects:

Grade 6: Change—Awareness of How Change Leads to Growth

Grade 7: Growth—Coming of Age as an Individual and in the Community

Grade 8: Independence—Internal Motivation and Self Discipline

The Middle School places strong emphasis on skill development and problem solving. The advisory program supports students as their lives change physically, emotionally, and socially.

Middle school courses, programs, and activities are designed for student achievement of the TVT Expected School-wide Learning Results (ESLRs) and the practice of six core values: *Hesed* (kindness), *Klal Yisrael* (Community), *Tzedek* (Justice), *Kavod* (respect) *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world) and *Emet* (Truth).

The middle school program prepares students to conduct themselves ethically as they prepare for success in high school.

Our students:

- Read and study efficiently
- Prioritize work and take effective notes in class
- Develop strong organizational, time management, and study skills
- Develop awareness of their strengths and limitations and learn how to ask for help
- Learn to differentiate fact from opinion and to think critically, independent of group opinion
- 

Middle school students take eight courses that span General Studies and Jewish Studies: English, History, Math, Science, Hebrew, Jewish Studies, Electives, and Physical Education. The student's advisor helps students gain the organizational and interpersonal skills that will allow them to navigate new middle school and to anticipate the demands and joys of being a high school student.

At Tarbut, teachers strive to create a curriculum that appeals to middle school students, one which is meaningful, integrated, and thematic. Teachers take multiple approaches in their instruction to address students' different learning styles and needs, and ask students to engage in authentic, appropriate assessment, all with the sole purpose of increasing student motivation and learning. Middle school classrooms should be characterized by a hum of activity and observable enjoyment in learning.

## Expected School-wide Learning Results

### Tarbut V'Torah Community Day School graduates will be:

#### Strongly-Identified Jews Who:

- understand that G-d, the people of Israel, and the Land of Israel are the underpinnings of Judaism
- are committed to Jewish continuity and the flourishing of Jewish community in both Israel and the Diaspora
- understand and respect denominational differences and are committed to Jewish pluralism
- are imbued with Jewish ethics and values
- read, write, and speak Hebrew, the language of the Torah, Israel, and our heritage
- are knowledgeable about Jewish history
- are literate in the texts of Jewish tradition
- have synagogue skills
- are knowledgeable about Jewish holidays
- have familiarity with Jewish life cycle events

#### Moral and Ethical Adults Who:

- interact with others with the utmost respect, integrity, and honesty (*tzelem elohim*)
- are sensitive and responsive to the needs of those less fortunate (*tzedakah*)
- behave in a manner consistent with “love the other as thyself” (*ve’ahavata le’reaha kamokha*)
- are dedicated to serving their communities (Jewish, Israeli, American)
- are open to the opinions, ideas, and ideals of others
- will defend their principles and the rights of others
- recognize and value intellectual integrity

#### Critical Thinkers and Problem-Solvers Who:

- use of a variety of sources, strategies, skills, and concepts to demonstrate effective problem-solving skills
- use reflection and metacognitive thinking
- use creativity, ingenuity, and aesthetics in their thinking
- analyze the components of a complex problem
- recognize interdisciplinary relationships
- use data to analyze, evaluate and apply knowledge across disciplines
- use logical reasoning to reach sound conclusions
- generalize particular knowledge and solutions to novel situations
- apply new knowledge to real-life situations
- differentiate factual from non-factual information

#### Effective Communicators and Listeners who:

- write and speak with clarity
- read, comprehend, and use information from a variety of print and electronic sources
- use writing, reading, speaking, and listening in a variety of settings
- synthesize information from multiple sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in each
- ask cogent questions, and respond in an articulate manner
- formulate judgments and support them with convincing evidence

- evaluate the effectiveness of a speaker’s/author’s work
- employ multiple approaches to articulate complex concepts
- locate and use information from a variety of resources
- integrate technology effectively throughout the curriculum

Leaders and Team Players Who:

- demonstrate respect, integrity and acceptance of individual differences
- use teamwork in the pursuit of common goals
- take active roles outside of school
- seek guidance as necessary
- exercise leadership skills

Achievers and Life-Long Learners who:

- actively engage in the joy of learning
- positively impact their peers and their communities (*tikkun olam*)
- pursue their personal best throughout all disciplines
- understand and use organizational and time management skills to support productivity

## Middle School Program Overview

<b>COURSES</b>	<b>Grade 6</b>	<b>Grade 7</b>	<b>Grade 8</b>
<b>English</b>	English 6	English 7	English 8
<b>History</b>	Ancient World History	Medieval World History	United States History
<b>Math</b>	Math 6, Intermediate Math 6, Accelerated Math 6 Accelerated Pre-Algebra	Math 7, Pre-Algebra, Accelerated Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1A, Algebra 1 Honors	Algebra 1A, Algebra 1, Algebra 1 Honors, Geometry, Geometry Honors
<b>Science</b>	Science 6	Life Science Life Science Honors	Physical Science Physical Science Honors
<b>Jewish Studies</b>	Jewish Studies 6 Jewish Studies 6 Honors	Jewish Studies 7 Jewish Studies 7 Honors	Jewish Studies 8 Jewish Studies 8 Honors
<b>Hebrew Language &amp; Literature</b>	Hebrew (level TBD by dept)	Hebrew (level TBD by dept)	Hebrew (level TBD by dept)
<b>Electives</b>	Arts Wheel	Garage Band, Robotics, Spanish 1A, Theater, Visual Arts	Garage Band , Spanish 1B, Spanish 1, Visual Arts, Yearbook/Journalism
<b>Physical Education</b>	PE/Yoga	PE/Dance/Yoga	PE/Dance/Yoga

## Course Descriptions

### Athletics

#### Department Philosophy

The Athletics department believes that physical activity, whether an individual program or an organized sport, can have a tremendous positive impact on a student's wellbeing. The department stresses the promotion and achievement of two of the TVT ESLRs in particular—Leaders and Team Players and Life-long Learners. Other goals include the following:

- To provide physical activity essential to optimum growth and development
- To provide physical activities that will contribute to the student's knowledge of how to use leisure time wisely
- To provide opportunities for character and personality development through group effort, team spirit, and loyalty within the team sports framework
- To offer a wide range of activities for motor skill development
- To provide opportunities for mental development through the learning of game rules, techniques and strategies
- To provide opportunities for individual activities

#### Dance

Dance students will learn, experience, and master skills from the different genres of contemporary dance including: ballet/lyrical, musical theatre, jazz, and hip hop. Students will also be expected to work together in groups in order to create their own choreography. These dance experiences will give students the knowledge necessary to freely use terms and ideas involved in critiquing live dance performances. It will also help them to gain the skill and confidence necessary in order to participate in a live performance. This class may be taken either as a P.E. class or as an elective.

#### Physical Education

Through a variety of individual, group, and team activities, each student will improve in the areas of cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and the general components of fitness (push-ups, crunches, etc.). Each student will have the opportunity to participate and improve in team and individual sports. Students will engage in activities that will allow them to develop and perfect life-long skills; and each student will have fun, relieve stress, improve his or her self-esteem, self-confidence, and learn to enjoy exercise. There will always be an opportunity for a student to succeed.

## **Yoga**

Yoga students will learn postures and core strengthening exercises designed to relax the body and mind. Exercises facilitate the flow of energy in the body and increase flexibility in the muscles, joints and spine. We will practice breathing techniques for relaxation, energy and clarity. We will develop better balance and sensitivity in our bodies by becoming more aware of them through practice and discipline.

## **English**

### **Department Philosophy**

“...all experience is an arch where through Gleams that untraveled world...[where we can] follow knowledge like a sinking star, Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.”

--Alfred, Lord Tennyson “Ulysses”

At Tarbut, the study of literature and composition emphasizes the crucial value of the written word and the study of the human condition. Literature from different times and places reveals how it feels to undergo all manner of experience and explores the meaning of the experience.

Students learn to read with a critical mind all genres, representing a broad range of historical and cultural perspectives. Practice in writing in various modes allows students to develop their ability to articulate thought and feeling; they learn that writing is an extensive and ongoing process. Student writing emerges from coursework and student interest.

The overall program strives to achieve proficiency in all facets of English studies. The department endeavors to establish tools by which students become lifelong learners who will read and write thoughtfully and analytically, appreciating the products of other minds and the expression of their own.

### **English 6**

The purpose of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts program is to engage students in the acts of reading, writing, and communicating. They will learn to become active readers and further develop reading comprehension, apply critical and creative thinking skills, and cultivate independent habits of mind. Students will write in many genres, including poetry, short stories, essays, journals, and persuasive speeches, as well as create interactive presentations. Students will also learn to organize, revise, and critique written work, and plan and implement a research paper and project

The novels on the reading list present characters who are dynamic: their lives and identities are changing, they are gaining more awareness about who they are, and they are adapting to new environments and moments in history. Through the literature, we will discuss and write about the themes of change, awareness, adaptation.

## **English 7—The Search for Self through Literature and Composition**

This course expands the framework of evolving reading and composition skills and knowledge of literary concepts. Writing assignments emphasize content as well as structure, as students learn to develop not only the length of their papers but also the quality of their examples and commentary in writing. Students practice analysis through their study of literature and the personal narrative. Students also practice becoming reliable peer editors. Vocabulary is explored through core reading and classical roots. Grammar, writing mechanics, and research skills are a regular part of the curriculum. Core reading selections investigate multicultural issues, the complexity of making decisions in the modern world, and the difficulty of accepting or formulating personal identity. Texts may include *The House on Mango Street*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

## **English 8—Introduction to American Literature and Composition Responsibility and Community through American Literature**

The reading in this course provides students the opportunity to explore and understand American culture. Selections from poetry, novels, and plays reinforce literary concepts introduced in previous classes. The course expands students' writing experiences by introducing the full-length essay in a variety of modes, including literary analysis and personal narrative. Students study vocabulary from their core and personal reading and continue to develop practical applications of vocabulary. The study of grammar and mechanics fosters correctness and confidence in both oral and written communication. Projects, writing assignments, and oral presentations throughout the year promote the development of research and presentation skills. Students also read several outside reading books over the course of the year to develop their independent analytical skills and foster the enjoyment of the written word.

## **English Elective**

### **Yearbook/Journalism (Grade 8)**

The 8th grade journalism/yearbook class teaches 8th graders the basics of writing for a publication and creating a yearbook. They write articles for The Lions' Pride and create pages for the Middle & Upper School yearbook. In Journalism students learn the principles, ethics, and responsibilities of a free press. They write news, feature, and sports stories as well as editorials. They distribute the newspaper and experience the challenges of teamwork. In yearbook students engage in a variety of tasks, such as creating computer-generated layouts, taking pictures and writing captions. Students must take photographs of in school and after school activities. Students must be prepared to meet deadlines. After completing this class students are prepared to join the Upper school staffs of either the newspaper or yearbook as 9th graders.

## Foreign Language (Spanish)

### Department Philosophy

The teaching of Spanish is based on the idea that it is essential to learn other languages, because that entails learning about other cultures. This is essential because of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy that our students will encounter in the working world of the present and future. At all levels of Spanish, we instruct in the target language and clarify meaning and express understanding without translation. We provide a rich target language environment and thematic cultural content in which students learn to express personal meaning in Spanish.

### Spanish 1A

Spanish 1A, offered in the Middle School only, is the first semester of Spanish 1 extended over a year. In this course, students develop communicative proficiency and cultural awareness in an age-appropriate context through vocabulary expansion activities, monologues, dialogues, role-playing, oral comprehension and discussions. Spanish cultural activities and projects are also introduced to expand the students' knowledge of Spanish culture. Objectives include student practice of regular and irregular verb tenses; expressing likes and dislikes, greetings and expressions; comprehension of formal and informal spoken language; the ability to order food at a restaurant; identifying personal possessions, places and origins; and the ability to discuss family.

### Spanish 1B

Spanish 1B, offered in the Middle School only, is the second semester of Spanish 1 extended over a year. In this course, the student will achieve facility in all aspects of listening, understanding, speaking, writing and reading lessons. Idiomatic expressions and verb conjugations are stressed in addition to other grammatical concepts. History and civilization are introduced in conjunction with customs as a supplement to the text.

The course begins with a review of Spanish 1A. By the end of this course, students should be able to use commands with *usted* and *ustedes*; use the immediate future tense (*tener ganas de* +infinitive); know the preterite tense of regular verbs and some irregular verbs; and use the verb *gustar* with all indirect object pronouns. Students should be comfortable with the present progressive, past, present, and future tenses.

## **Spanish 1**

Spanish 1 is a comprehensive basic course in which the student achieves facility in all aspects of listening, understanding, speaking, writing, and reading of the first-year lessons. Idiomatic expressions and verb conjugations are stressed in addition to other grammatical concepts. Hispanic history and civilization are introduced in conjunction with customs as a supplement to the text.

## **Hebrew Language & Literature**

### **Hebrew Department philosophy**

Our curriculum, NETA, is driven by the belief that mastery of the Hebrew language will promote students' understanding of their History, culture, and tradition, thus, fostering a sense of belonging, to the Jewish people and the core values emphasis at Tarbut V'Torah: Kavod (respect), Tikun Olam (repairing the world), Tzedek (Justice), Emet (truth), and Chesed (Kindness). Further more Hebrew language study will cultivate strong ties with the state of Israel and Klal Israel (Wider community) which will ignite a commitment to lifelong Jewish learning.

### **Overview and Goals**

Hebrew is a heritage language for the Jewish people. A Jew is enriched by the process of learning Hebrew. The mastery of Hebrew allows for the highest level of participation into the culture, scholarship, and spiritual endeavors of the Jewish people. The essential goal of the Hebrew program at TVT is to reach mastery of Hebrew for our students.

### **Placement**

- The students are placed according to their proficiency in the language, and not solely based on their age group.
- A placement exam will be given to the students at the month of May at their 5<sup>th</sup> grade (On line, by Neta), and at their 8<sup>th</sup> grade (internally) to best support and indicate on the appropriate placement.
- Hebrew Placement will be based on an external, nationwide, on line placement test, and upon a written piece.
- For our Honor tracks, students will need to earn B+ or above at their level, and to get Teacher's recommendation.

## **Orientation:**

In middle school our goal is to have the students master the material presented to them by the 4 books of "Alpha NETA" (20 units).

Alpha is a thorough introduction all Neta books. It will take at least **2 years** to complete Hebrew one.

The idea is to make the middle school a "bridge" between the lower school and the high school. This will ensure smooth transition to our high school program.

We hope that by using this structure, by high school most students will be enrolling to the regular track. Furthermore, we believe that by creating this path, we will gradually see that most students can do 4 books a year.

## **Middle school Tracks:**

TVT's Hebrew Department offers 4 different tracks of courses to its Middle schools students:

Once a student is placed into a track, it is likely that they will remain in this track from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. These tracks will also help in assessing the students' placement during high school.

### **Track A:**

6<sup>th</sup> grade- Mastering reading & writing both print & script + units 1 to 7

\* an external, nationwide Neta tests will be given after units 2, 5 and 7

7<sup>th</sup> grade: Units 8-13

\* a Neta tests will be given after units 10, and 13

8<sup>th</sup> grade: Units 14-20

\* a Neta tests will be given after units 15, 17 & 20

These students might be recommended for "Ulpan" in High school

### **Track B:**

6<sup>th</sup> grade: Units 1-10

\* a Neta test will be given after units 2,5,7 &10

7<sup>th</sup> grade: Units 11-20

\* a Neta test will be given after units 13,15,17 &20

8<sup>th</sup> grade: Neta books 1-3

\* a Neta test will be given after every book.

These students will learn in high school 3 books a year.

**Track C:**

6<sup>th</sup> grade: units 11-20

\* a Neta test will be given after every book.

7<sup>th</sup> grade: Neta books 1-4

\* a Neta test will be given after every book.

8<sup>th</sup> grade: Neta books 5-8

\* a Neta test will be given after every book.

These students may be recommended for Honor classes in High school.

The distribution to regular and Honor courses can be done only based on experience in the language and teacher recommendation. Therefore we will have only one track for this level.

**Post Neta/ Native speakers**

TVT recognizes the special needs of native speakers/Neta graduate students, and offers an equivalent curriculum to the one offered in Israel. At the end of the track students may choose to participate in the "Bagrut" exam for Hebrew grammar and/or literature offered in the local embassy.

Our goal is to provide our students a similar experience to growing up in Israel, attending an Israeli high school.

This course will best suite Israelis but is opened to "Neta graduate" students as well. This course offers a very challenging level of learning and a long term commitment and dedication of all parties involved: teachers, parents and most importantly- students.

**Neta graduate student is:**

- A student who finished learning all 25 books of Neta or
- A students who earned 100% on the Neta placement exam and
- A student who earned 700 points on the subject SAT test for Hebrew
- The SAT will be offered in class during the month of May

## History

### Department Philosophy

The study of history provides a context of historical knowledge essential for an understanding of the contemporary world. By analyzing historical events, students appreciate more fully the complexity of human experience. By examining social changes in other times, they develop a broad perspective and the ability to weigh evidence and assertions that citizens live with in a rapidly changing world. The history department at Tarbut is committed to developing curriculum that provides meaningful experiences in student learning. At all levels, the department provides students with the tools to think rigorously, to research and thereby generate knowledge empirically, and to articulate their thoughts coherently. One vital focus is on the development of reading and writing skills. Throughout courses, close critical reading is emphasized using textbooks, primary sources and literature. Activities and assignments incorporate vocabulary-building and encourage students to engage with the text on several levels. Writing instruction is designed to scaffold through the years in history courses, creating students who are skilled in expository and analytical writing. Uncovering and nurturing students' abilities, shaping a community of active scholars and researchers, and fostering a love of learning that will continue beyond Tarbut are our ultimate goals.

### **Ancient World History (Grade 6)**

Students in sixth grade study the Ancient Civilizations. The overarching theme is Interactions and Changes. An introductory geography unit addresses topics such as the ways in which people interact with the land, the environment's influence on human societies, and adaptations to the physical world. Following a geography overview, the course next examines the historical changes that have occurred as societies shifted from nomadic lifestyle to settled agrarian communities, and the specialization of labor that follows. Students will focus on the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Finally, the cumulative unit of study explores comparative philosophies, incorporating elements from the year's studies. The Ancient Civilizations course also provides opportunities for students to develop skills in the areas of comprehensive reading, critical thinking, evaluating different sources, communicating ideas formally and informally, and writing analytical paragraphs.

### **Medieval World History (Grade 7)**

Students will learn about the social, cultural, religious, and political changes that occurred across the continents (Africa, South America, Asia, and Europe) from approximately 500 to 1400 CE. Students learn about the history and geography of great civilizations that were developing concurrently throughout the world during medieval times. We will examine the growing economic interaction among societies, as well as the exchange of ideas, customs, and inventions. Students will practice reading for comprehension and learn how to take efficient notes while reading. The exploration of current global issues and the evolution of students' social consciousness are also discussed.

## United States History (Grade 8)

This course is a survey course of American History. Students will chronologically study the story of the United States and its people. The course begins with the Age of Exploration and Colonization and culminates with the Reconstruction Era following the American Civil War. The course strives to use anecdotes and first-person accounts and simulations to bring history alive. The core approach to the study of history is to show the connection between public events and ordinary peoples' experiences. The course will use current events to augment the study of the past and present.

## Jewish Studies

### Department Philosophy

The principles upon which the Jewish Studies department is founded can be said to form the four legs of a table, or שולחן *shulchan*: the mind (knowledge) דעת *da'at*; the heart לב *lev*; the hand (justice) צדק *tzedek*; and the soul נשמה *neshama*. The goals of the department are as follows:

- ✧ דעת To nurture life-long Jewish learning with a sophisticated capacity to learn a broad range of Jewish sources.
- ✧ לב To activate love and joy for Jewish learning and respect for diverse forms of Jewish practice and philosophy; to strengthen a deep connection to the Jewish people and to Israel.
- ✧ צדק To foster and encourage student embodiment and application of Jewish learning through living the values and practices of Judaism focusing on perfecting the world – תיקון עולם *tikkun olam*.
- ✧ נשמה To refine the soul by teaching a curriculum that develops cognitive skill, emotional reflection, and a relationship with the sacred.

### Students will:

- ✧ Become independent and literarily astute readers of the Jewish text in Hebrew and English.
- ✧ Engage in the learning of ancient, rabbinic, and modern modes of interpretation of the Biblical and Rabbinic texts while seeing themselves as a link in this ongoing chain of interpretation.
- ✧ Appreciate Jewish holy texts as multi-vocal, complex, and in the context of historical development.
- ✧ View the Tanakh and Rabbinic texts as the formative narratives of the Jewish people – past, present, and future.
- ✧ Understand and value how the Land of Israel informs and shapes the historical, theological, and sociological experiences of the Jewish people through the study of Tanakh and Rabbinic texts.

- ✧ Develop an appreciation for the sacredness of the Tanakh and Rabbinic texts as the primary records of the meeting between God and the People of Israel and as essential texts through which Jews continue to grapple with theological, spiritual, and existential questions.
- ✧ Understand, through the study of Tanakh, Rabbinic texts, and their interpretations, the role of mitzvot in the shaping of the ethical character and religious practices of the individual and the Jewish people.
- ✧ Develop a love of Torah and Jewish texts for their own sake and embrace them as inspiring resources that inform their values, moral commitments, and ways of experiencing the world.

### **Rationale and Background of the Middle School Jewish Studies Curriculum**

The development of a successful Jewish Studies Curriculum is nothing if it cannot reach our student body. Jewish living in Orange County, CA has manifold meaning to each family and each individual student. We embrace diversity to strengthen our Jewish roots while drawing nourishment from the same roots. The Jewish Studies curriculum can control the flow of information to our students, and we help to shape the feelings, thoughts, and deeds that follow from our transfer of Judaic knowledge.

The Jewish tradition addresses the challenges with which modern society confronts our historical Jewish values, beliefs and hopes. Many times, the intersection is harmonious while at other times our students struggle with the endeavor to uncover understanding and relevance in terms of their own lives. The curriculum is designed to help our students to grow through the experience of immersion in the world of Jewish study in an environment that recognizes there is no single answer to what it means to be Jewish.

The graduate of our program has engaged in classic Jewish study and has the capacity to apply that study with action. He or she explores the intricacies of *halachic* reasoning and the rich interpretation from our scholars that cover both the exegesis of Jewish tradition and the transmission of interpretative meaning found in our holy sources.

As the Torah explains that life was blown into Adam's nostrils, we create a life for Judaic knowledge through our discourse, study and activities within the upper school Jewish Studies department. In order to give animation to that life, our courses encourage the student to search for a range of meaning in terms of Judaic knowledge extending from the level of basic factual lessons to synthesis and application of the highest levels of learning.

The terrain that our studies take place is one that has beauty, sustenance, variety, challenges, rewards, and the full capacity to transfer our Jewish roots to the student at Tarbut V'Torah Community Day School.

## Jewish Studies Advanced and Honors Courses

Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon once discussed which is better, to study or to act? Rabbi Tarfon said, “action is better”, Akiva said, “study.” The students listening said, “study because study leads to action.” The Jewish studies curriculum at Tarbut V'Torah School embraces the notion that study leads to action and we proudly offer an opportunity for students to take classes with honors distinction in addition to our other outstanding classes.

Jewish studies advanced and honors classes cover more depth of subject matter while maintaining the breadth of material encountered in other Jewish studies courses. The devices engaged to increase depth of subject matter are increased use of original source material and source material translated into the vernacular, more detailed interpretations using support from a wider body of source material, higher demands for thorough analysis of ideas, and opportunities to create thesis supported by inductive and deductive reasoning.

The curriculum designed for Jewish studies honors classes require a higher level of time committed to studying about the subject matter and a rigorous approach to evaluating application of the finer details of the ideas presented. Also, the courses are designed to draw on a multidiscipline outlook of the course subject matter including study of: religion, history, language, science, art and philosophy.

The benefits to successfully completing a Jewish studies honor course are:

- Increased depth of knowledge
- Strengthening of higher level and more demanding cognitive analytical tools
- A more precise understanding
- The benefit of accomplishment in completing a more challenging and rigorous course of study.

## Jewish Studies 6

Our goal is to enable students to become independent and literarily astute readers of the Judaic texts. The Jewish Studies program in sixth grade includes the weekly Torah portion, Torah, prayers, holidays, and *midot* (values). In sixth grade we use the Chumash, worksheets and Hebrew stories.

In each area of study, students will be able to:

### Torah

- ⌚ recount the story of the weekly Torah portion in detail
- ⌚ name the portions of the Torah
- ⌚ read verses from the Chumash in Hebrew
- ⌚ recount from the *chumash B'midbar* (The book of Numbers) the important events during the Israelites' journey through the desert
- ⌚ identify the laws given to the children of Israel before entering the promise land as a nation

### Prayer

- ⌚ participate comfortably in the prayers during *t'fillah* (Shacharit and Rosh Chodesh)
- ⌚ read and recite the prayers from the siddur with fluency and confidence

- ⌚ be able to locate in the siddur commonly recited prayers
- ⌚ express main concepts of prayer
- ⌚ assume a leadership role in communal prayer
- ⌚ explain the main concepts of prayers

### Shabbat and Holidays

- ⌚ show understanding of the Jewish calendar
- ⌚ indicate exact Hebrew date of major Jewish holidays
- ⌚ expand knowledge of liturgy, history and practices associated with holidays and observances
- ⌚ continue to demonstrate in greater detail and depth their understanding of the customs and the meanings behind them
- ⌚ continue to recite with added confidence the blessings and prayers appropriate for the holiday

### Israel

- ⌚ identify important events in the 60 year old history of the state of Israel
- ⌚ use research, decision-making, and time utilization skills to prepare projects and reports about a topic of their choice relating to Israel (cities, flowers, stamps, leaders, etc.)
- ⌚ discuss current events in Israel

### Values

- ⌚ know the *mida* of the month
- ⌚ use key concepts and behaviors of *midot* (values) and make choices and decisions in daily activities according to *midot* studied in class
- ⌚ demonstrate responsibility in making choices and decisions based on *midot*

## **Jewish Studies 7: *Mishnah Chumash***

This course explores two themes, relationships and leadership. In the relationships unit, the student will encounter the method by which the *Mishnah* instructs the Jew. Responsibility for one's actions is at the core of this class. Our focus in this unit is to explore the Oral Tradition's view of relationships between people. When studying the theme of leadership, students will engage in close study Exodus. The students will encounter questions such as, how do leaders face moral dilemmas? How do they become role models? What constitutes leadership? What is the student obligated to do for our leaders? Students will engage in translation and textual analysis with guidance from traditional and modern commentators. From this, students will develop a personal understanding of a collection of Jewish leaders from the Torah and be able to comment on the leader's attributes and foibles. The study of the leaders will be augmented by the addition of *midrashim* as expounded by historical Jewish commentators, with a focus on Rashi.

## **Jewish Studies 8: *Rabbinics Chumash***

In this course, students will read selections from Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Sages) and Genesis. In Pirke Avot, students explore the idea of Thought, Feeling and Action. Students will research intellectual and moral qualities as seen from the viewpoint of the sages. Topics discussed include memory retention, critical analytical ability, creativity, emotional control, sensitivity, empathy and learning styles. The material in *Pirke Avot* will challenge the student to cope with another's advice or opinion. When students read Genesis, they will think about the theme of The Moral and Spiritual Quest of the Jew, In this section of the course, students will examine the role of humanity in Creation. They will discuss the concept of being created to perfect the world given our ability to discern right from wrong. The student will also study the notion of Sabbath from the standpoint of the Torah and through our theological discussion of imitating God's rest.

At this point of the curriculum, students will be able to enrich class discussions with opinions that emerge from comprehension of their Jewish roots.

## **Mathematics**

### **Department Philosophy**

The goal of TVT Mathematics is for all students to study mathematics successfully at a pace and depth appropriate to their individual needs. Our math program provides three different tracks for students of varying mathematical ability and interest. The middle school tracks feed into the three high school tracks. Accelerated courses offer an introduction to the rigors of the honors program which prepares students for AP Calculus BC while classes at the other end of the spectrum provide ample time and support for students to master the material.

As students enter middle school a natural question is "How will middle school math placement affect high school math placement and competitiveness in the college admissions process?" The math department places students in the highest math class in which they will be successful. In middle school, there is considerable flexibility built into the program so that as students mature and gain mathematical confidence, they can switch between tracks. A student who enters middle school at the regular level in sixth grade and matures mathematically could very well take Honors Geometry in ninth grade.

The middle school math progression transitions students from elementary math to their first formal course in algebra. Pre-Algebra courses shore up basic skills: order of operations, fractions, decimals, integers, and basic linear equation solving while providing a significant glimpse at core algebraic concepts. Pre-Algebra courses also introduce students to important basic concepts of plane figures which they'll use throughout algebra and build on during their study of geometry later on in their mathematical career. Algebra 1 establishes the foundation in symbolic grammar and problem solving skills necessary for all levels of upper school mathematics as well as many science courses.

## **Mathematics Placement**

Because success in mathematics depends upon students sequentially mastering material, TVT Mathematics takes placement into its courses very seriously. Student placement is determined each spring by the entire department, which meets to discuss the individual needs of each student. Factors in placement decisions are student grades, standardized test results, teacher recommendation and, in many cases, the results of placement tests designed and scored by an external source. Once student placements are finalized, they are communicated directly to students via a placement letter.

The department knows that placement results are a conversation between teacher, student, the department and parents. We encourage parents to discuss placement results with their children. Occasionally, students may wish to take a course other than the one into which they've been placed. For this reason, the department has a placement appeals process in which students may petition for placement reconsideration. It's not uncommon for petitions that are approved to contain requirements for summer work.

At the same time, the department realizes that students—in particular middle school students—mature mathematically at different times. For this reason, the department has recently reworked its sequence of courses to allow more flexibility in moving from track to track at the middle school level.

The department takes individual achievement in mathematics seriously. Those students or parents who are concerned with about individual student placement—or worried about implications regarding future coursework—should speak with their middle school mathematics teacher or contact the department chair directly.

Criteria for placement is transparent and listed below.

### **Mathematics Placement: Rising Sixth Grades**

Students who are entering grades six and seven are placed using a four-fold system that takes into account: (1) the student's grades in mathematics courses; (2) the recommendation of the student's current mathematics teacher; (3) the student's scores on the CTP-4; and the results of a department-administered placement test. A rising sixth grader's placements are communicated directly to students and their parents by the mathematics department by May 15th of the academic year.

Students and parents may petition for a change in placement by filing a petition with the mathematics department by June 1. The department will meet to consider the petition and communicate its final decision directly to parents. In cases where a petition is granted, summer coursework is almost always required. Petitions received after June 1 will not be entertained by the department. (If June 1 falls on a weekend or a holiday, petitions are due on the first school day following June 1st.)

### **Mathematics Placement: Rising Seventh Graders and above**

At the end of the first semester, the mathematics department meets to decide placements of students who will be entering grades eight through twelve in the following academic year. Placements are decided using teacher recommendations, student grades and, where appropriate, standardized test scores and the results of placement tests. The specific prerequisites for each course are listed in the course descriptions below. A student's placement is communicated directly to the student by February 15th of the school year. All placements issued by the department are provision and required students to maintain their

performance through the end of the second semester. If a student wishes to appeal a placement, he or she may do so by petitioning the department in writing prior to March 15th of the school year (if March 15th falls on a weekend or holiday, the petition deadline is the very next school day). Petitions are available from math teachers and online. The department will then meet to consider the student's request. In instances where the department grants a student's request, summer work is often a requirement.

### Mathematics Sequencing

The following flow chart shows typical sequences of mathematics courses at the middle school level (grade nine is also included in the table to show how each sequence transitions to high school mathematics). Obviously, some children may follow paths that differ from those summarized below.

Grade 6	Math 6, Intermediate Math 6, or Accelerated Math 6		
Grade 7	Math 7	Pre-Algebra	Accelerated Pre-Algebra
Grade 8	Pre-Algebra	Algebra 1	Algebra 1 Honors
Grade 9	Algebra 1	Geometry	Geometry Honors

### Mathematics Statement on Homework

Good mathematics is organized, concise and flows logically. It's important that students develop skills at presenting mathematics consistently and properly. For this reason, TVT Mathematics has department-wide standards for homework.

Each write up of a homework problem should be written legibly and include the problem number, the text of the original problem, have all work in the answer shown and have a box drawn around the final answer. Additionally, students should check the answers to odd numbered homework problems in the back of their mathematics textbook while they are doing their homework. When solving a word problem, students should clearly identify their variables and the quantities those variables represent as well as make a note of any and all constraints on the variables. In order to receive full credit, homework must be completed in the above manner prior to coming to class. Please note that checking one's answers against those provided in the back of the book is part of doing one's homework.

### Math Counts and Math Club

Math Counts is both a club and a competition. The nationally designed program for sixth, seventh and eighth graders features a curriculum for math club activities as well as competitions at the local, regional, state and national levels. In addition to Math Counts, students may participate in additional competitions depending on their interest; in particular, students are invited to take the American Math Competitions 8 exam in November. Math Counts coaching sessions usually run from November through the competition in February.

## **Math 6**

Students in Math 6 work at mastering their study of mathematics at the elementary level by strengthening their numeracy skills, especially in work with whole numbers, fractions, integers, decimals and percents. Instructors frequently work individually with students to address their particular needs. Emphasis is placed on mastering the order of operations and developing a strong sense of numeracy.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Intermediate Math 6**

Students in Intermediate Math 6 complete their study of mathematics at the elementary level by strengthening their numeracy skills, especially in work with whole numbers, fractions, integers, decimals and percents. Considerable emphasis is placed on mastering the order of operations and beginning to understand how to apply the order of operations to more abstract situations. Students are introduced to pre-algebra concepts, including equation solving.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Accelerated Math 6**

Students in Accelerated Math 6 encounter a fast-paced review of basic numeracy skills, especially in work with whole numbers, fractions, integers, decimals and percents. The class then places considerable emphasis on mastering the order of operations and beginning to understand how to apply the order of operations to more abstract situations. Students are introduced to preliminary algebraic concepts.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Math 7**

Math 7 is designed for the student who requires additional work in mastering the basics of number skills and the order of operations. Extensive work with fractions, decimals and percents is included as well as basic equation solving. Students are also given individual projects designed to strengthen their skills in areas where they need additional practice.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Pre-Algebra**

Pre-Algebra develops a student's computational skills while assisting students as they develop a strong sense of the foundations of mathematics, including a substantial section on solving linear equations. The goal of the course is a student's mastery in core areas so that students may take subsequent mathematics courses with confidence. Students who complete this course successfully will next take either Algebra I or Honors Algebra, depending on their placement at that time.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Accelerated Pre-Algebra**

Students continue to master basic skills: order of operations, numeracy skills including work with decimals, fractions, and signed numbers. At the same time, themes from Algebra and Geometry and problem solving are woven through each section. Students who complete this course successfully will next take either Algebra I or Honors Algebra, depending on their placement at that time.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Algebra 1**

Algebra 1 develops the mathematics background necessary for all subsequent mathematics courses. Students build on their numerical proficiency as they encounter symbolic manipulation and polynomial arithmetic. Substantial units include linear and quadratic equations, factoring, algebraic fractions and radicals. Basic graphing in the Cartesian plane is also covered.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

## **Algebra 1 Honors**

Students in Algebra 1 Honors complete their mastery of polynomial arithmetic begun in Foundations of Algebra. Substantial units on linear equations and their systems, factoring, algebraic fractions, graphing, linear and nonlinear inequalities, exponents and radicals are learned. Students are introduced to not only the language of mathematics but also the rigors of mathematical discourse. The Fundamental Theorem of Algebra and its corollaries are broached at the end of the course.

**Prerequisite:** In lieu of prerequisites, a placement process, described above, is used.

*(Note: Courses above the level of Algebra 1 Honors are taught by the upper school mathematics faculty and are listed in the upper school curriculum guide.)*

## **Middle School Mathematics Electives Course Descriptions**

### **Robotics (Grade 7)**

The Middle School Robotics program utilizes the award winning Lego Mindstorms curriculum created by the National Science Foundation and Carnegie Mellon University's world famous robotics lab. Following the "cSTEM" (Communication, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) educational model, the TVT Middle School Robotics course covers Basic Robotics Engineering Level I, Robotics Engineering Level II, and participation in the FIRST Lego League (FLL) nationwide competition. At the end of this course of studies the students will be able to work in project groups and utilize high level cognitive skills to solve "real life" problems through the use of the basic Lego Mindstorms programming interface, physics, mathematics and robotics engineering.

## **Science**

### **Department Philosophy**

Science at Tarbut V'Torah is more than just learning facts and figures. We teach a process. The scientific method helps students to approach and solve difficult problems. This is especially valuable when faced with a problem unlike anything that they have previously encountered. Nothing emphasizes the scientific process better than the lab. For this reason, experiments are an essential part of our classroom instruction. Students make observations, develop hypotheses, conduct experiments, collect data, and statistically analyze the data. The results of the experiment can either support our hypothesis, in which case we look for ways to further test it, or it refutes our hypothesis, in which case we look to make revisions. Laboratory experiments have the added benefit of bringing excitement into the classroom, thereby encouraging students to pursue further studies in science.

### **Science 6**

The first semester of 6th grade science focuses on human anatomy and disease. Students will study different systems of the body, including the respiratory, cardiovascular, nervous, digestive, and skeletal systems. They will learn about the functions of different organs and how they work together under normal conditions. They will then investigate how genetics, infection, or injury can disrupt these organs along with the treatment and prevention options currently available. The anatomy lessons are accompanied by numerous hands-on experiences such as measuring blood pressure, identifying blood type, dissecting a sheep heart and cow eye, and building models of the systems. Team-work is emphasized as students work together to solve problems such as the source of a food poisoning epidemic. Students will sharpen their research skills by using references and web resources to search for answers and solutions to guided questions. The second semester introduces major themes of Earth Science including plate tectonics, ecosystems, and water and rock properties. Students will investigate many rock samples and learn about the characteristics used to identify them. The year culminates in a final research project on a topic of interest.

### **Life Science (Grade 7)**

Topics covered in the 7th grade include the scientific method, cell structure, genetics, evolution, classification, and human ancestors. Each unit is accompanied by hands-on activities to allow students real-life discovery of the major themes of study. Students will learn to use scientific tools for observation and measurement such as the compound light microscope and triple-beam balance. They will engage in team work during laboratory exercises and also practice independent research. The year culminates with a creative project that ties together all the topics with the creation of a unique, but evolutionarily possible, future animal.

### **Life Science Honors (Grade 7)**

Topics covered in the 7th grade include the scientific method, cell structure, genetics, evolution, classification, and human ancestors. The honors section places special emphasis on independent discovery, critical thinking and analysis. Laboratory exercises may require the ability to create own procedures, collect data, analyze and interpret the data, and critique the progress of the lab. A large portion of questions on assessments will be open-ended critical thinking questions requiring thorough and thoughtful responses.

### **Physical Science (Grade8)**

In 8th grade physical science, students explore the natural phenomena that surrounds them. The year is a study of both the basic principles of chemistry and physics. Students experiment with the properties of matter and the states of matter as they progress towards a solid understanding of the differences between compounds and mixtures. Students will build boats as they explore Archimedes Principle and the concepts of buoyancy and density. There are also a number of experiments to understand phase change as a physical property. The semester culminates with students using their vast knowledge of the physical and chemical properties of matter to separate mixtures and break apart compounds.

We begin the second half of the year with an exploration of motion and forces. We investigate the concepts of momentum, acceleration, velocity, terminal velocity and gravity through the experimental process. We will replicate Galileo's experiments with inclined planes. We then go on to understand aspects of Newton's three laws of motion. The end of the year is electric for all students as we investigate work, machines and energy. Here we will dig deeper into understanding the concept of conservation of energy, the energy of waves and an introduction into electricity.

## **Physical Science Honors (Grade 8)**

Honors science in 8th grade covers all the same topics as the general 8th grade science class. The major difference in honors relates to the depth we cover material, the method used for laboratory investigation and a difference in testing questions. In honors students follow some more complex concepts on top of the general curriculum. When we do laboratories to investigate phenomenon the honors students are asked to create their own procedures and materials list rather than being provided step by step instructions. Tests in the honors class cover the same material as in general studies but also go further with more critical thinking questions. In 8th grade physical science, students explore the natural phenomena that surrounds them. The year is a study of both the basic principles of chemistry and physics. Students experiment with the properties of matter and the states of matter as they progress towards a solid understanding of the differences between compounds and mixtures. Students will build boats as they explore Archimedes Principle and the concepts of buoyancy and density. There are also a number of experiments to understand phase change as a physical property. The semester culminates with students using their vast knowledge of the physical and chemical properties of matter to separate mixtures and break apart compounds. We begin the second half of the year with an exploration of motion and forces. We investigate the concepts of momentum, acceleration, velocity, terminal velocity and gravity through the experimental process. We will replicate Galileo's experiments with inclined planes. We then go on to understand aspects of Newton's three laws of motion. The end of the year is electric for all students as we investigate work, machines and energy. Here we will dig deeper into understanding the concept of conservation of energy, the energy of waves and an introduction into electricity

## **Visual and Performing Arts**

### **Grade Six Arts Wheel**

All students in sixth grade are enrolled in the Arts Wheel class, made up of four sections, one for each of the four arts disciplines. Sixth graders will rotate through Dance, Music, Drama, and Visual Arts. Students in sixth grade are starting to define their own point of view and are ready to bring together basic skills they have learned in earlier grades. Four teachers work together to provide developmentally appropriate lessons that are linked through the languages of visual and performing arts, as well as connecting to the Sixth Grade theme change. The Arts Wheel classes meet four times a week, and students are automatically rotated at the quarter mark. By providing rich, interrelated arts studies, teachers can help students develop both creative expression and artistic valuing. Improving self-confidence and increasing arts vocabulary, students enjoy an increasingly complex arts curriculum that prepares them to express themselves individually.

## **Grades Seven & Eight Arts Electives**

Seventh and Eighth grade students have attained basic knowledge and skills in the four arts disciplines and are now ready to choose an area to explore more in depth.

### **Dance**

Dance students will learn, experience and master skills from the different genres of contemporary dance including: ballet, jazz, modern dance, musical theater and hip hop. These dance experiences will give students the knowledge necessary to freely use terms and ideas involved in discussing and critiquing dance performances. Students will also gain the skill and confidence necessary in order to participate in a live performance. Students will be expected to maintain a dance journal in order to note daily corrections and observations. This class may be taken either as a P.E. or as an elective.

### **Garage Band (Grade 7)**

Instructor approval is needed to enroll in this course. The goal of this course is to create an ensemble of musicians/vocalists capable of performing contemporary popular music. Students should have some familiarity with great “contemporary” popular music of the U.S. and elsewhere, proficiency with a primary instrument, and in some cases the rudimentary learning of a secondary instrument and/or singing. Proficiency on any instrument is acceptable and encouraged. Students will gain understanding of basic improvisation and how it relates to the songs chord changes and will learn and use the vocabulary of music criticism. Above all, students will learn in an environment where the student can assert himself musically without fear of disapproval.

Prerequisite: Instructor Approval

### **Garage Band (Grade 8)**

Instructor approval is needed to enroll in this course. The goal of this course is to create an ensemble of musicians/vocalists capable of performing contemporary popular music. Students should have some familiarity with great “contemporary” popular music of the U.S. and elsewhere, proficiency with a primary instrument, and in some cases the rudimentary learning of a secondary instrument and/or singing. Proficiency on any instrument is acceptable and encouraged. Students will gain understanding of basic improvisation and how it relates to the songs chord changes and will learn and use the vocabulary of music criticism. Above all, students will learn in an environment where the student can assert himself musically without fear of disapproval.

Prerequisite: Instructor Approval

## **Theater (Grade 7)**

This elective is an introduction to theatre for middle school students. Class time will involve warm-ups and interactive instruction in movement, voice, improvisation, text interpretation, stage presence, and character development as well as set and costume design and playwriting. Students will rehearse monologues and ensemble pieces. No two days will be the same. The semester will culminate with a showcase performance open to classmates, friends and family.

## **Visual Arts**

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade visual arts students continue to practice the basics of effective visual communication and to justify the artistic choices they make. Increased technical skills are demonstrated as students process and create art. Using the elements and principles of design, studying the work of famous artists, and identifying what they believe to be important to look for in works of art, 7-8 visual arts students will develop a series of related works to express a personal statement. Their ability to present a reasoned argument about the artistic value of a work of art can be applied to the works they create or the works of others.