



Guiding Philosophy and Curriculum Overview: **U14 7th and 8th Grade Academic Program**

I. Guiding Philosophy

Burke Mountain Academy's 7th and 8th grade academic program is backwards designed from the Academy proper's college-preparatory curriculum. This program-wide approach, from grade 7 to grade 12, at its core, is designed to support students as they develop the confidence to take intellectual risks, the tools to access and advocate for their own learning, and the skills and dispositions necessary to become socially aware and globally responsible citizens.

The academic component of our educational philosophy seeks to develop a personal commitment to lifelong learning. Three fundamental principles define our academic program:

- Stimulating intellectual curiosity
- Developing critical skills
- Building content and conceptual understanding

The academic experience at Burke is based in the liberal arts and rooted in rigor to help teach the virtue of hard work. Our curriculum is constantly being refined, reflecting our dedication to innovation as well as our commitment to providing a rich and challenging course of study to empower our students. Character development and lifelong intellectual curiosity are the ambitious destinations toward which we navigate; small classes sized for quality and tutorials are the means by which we steer.

II. Curriculum Overview

A. Grade 7

1. **Global Literature** - The 7th grade English curriculum will center around Global Literature. Students will read novels from different cultures across the globe and delve deeper into the similarities and differences in the human experience across the world.
 - a) Guiding questions include: Who are the people we share this earth with? How are we both similar to and different from those people? What can we learn from the study of different cultures? What misconceptions can we correct?
 - b) Competencies include: Identifying and central ideas in literature, integrating knowledge and ideas, problem-solving, developing expository and argumentative writing skills, building research skills, and developing oral presentation skills.
2. **World Cultures**- The 7th grade Social Studies curriculum will center around a guiding theme of World Cultures which augments the concepts studied in the

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English course. Students will use this course to develop schema around the topics discussed and studied in the English course.

- a) Guiding questions include: What do I think I know about the world around me? How do I learn about other cultures? What do I want to know about other cultures? How does history impact the way I perceive the world?
 - b) Competencies include: Understanding and leveraging text features to glean information, identifying, synthesizing, and explaining key ideas, problem-solving, developing evidenced-based writing skills, building research skills, and practicing oral presentation skills.
3. **Earth Science-** The 7th grade science curriculum will focus on the origins of the world around us and the elements we encounter each day.
- a) Guiding questions include: What is earth's place in the universe? How did the earth come to be and how has it changed since? What factors influence the elements of the world we know? How do human beings interact with the earth?
 - b) Competencies include: Developing a knowledge of science and engineering practices, understanding discipline specific core ideas, and synthesizing core ideas to make connections across course topics.
4. **Pre-Algebra-** This course will support students in preparation for algebra. The course is intended to help students develop number literacy, problem-solving skills, and real-world application skills.
- a) Course topics include: Ratios and proportional relationships, the number system, expressions and equations, statistics and probability.
 - b) Mathematical Practices:
 - (1) Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
 - (2) Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
 - (3) Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
 - (4) Model with mathematics.
 - (5) Use appropriate tools strategically.
 - (6) Attend to precision.
 - (7) Look for and make use of structure.
 - (8) Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

B. Grade 8

1. **American Literature-** The 8th grade English curriculum will center around the guiding theme of American Literature. Students will read classics from different time periods in American history as well as modern young adult novels. The primary focus of this course is to approach understanding the history of America from perspectives other than our own.
- a) Guiding questions include: Who am I? What stories do I know? Who's stories don't I know? Why? How do I process and respond to newly developed world views? How do I connect with others that are different from me? Why should I make an effort to connect with people who are different from me?

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- b) Competencies include: Identifying and central ideas in literature, integrating knowledge and ideas, analyzing and utilizing literary text structures, problem-solving, developing analytical writing skills, building research skills, and developing oral presentation skills.
- 2. **Perspectives of America-** The 8th grade Social Studies curriculum will augment the concepts studied in the English course. In this class, students will learn about historical events surrounding the novels they are studying in English. They will also practice assessing and questioning the lens through which history is written, and work to research and understand other perspectives.
 - a) Guiding questions include: What history do I know? What history am I missing? What factors influenced the trajectory of America? How do I grow my understanding of empathy towards historically underrepresented groups in American history? What is that important?
 - b) Competencies include: Understanding and leveraging text features to glean information; identifying, synthesizing, and explaining key ideas, problem-solving, developing evidenced-based analytical writing skills, building research skills, and practicing oral presentation skills.
- 3. **Environmental Science-** As participants in a sport that relies on the natural world, our students must become aware of their role in protecting this earth that we live on. This science course will delve into both local and global environmental topics with the aim of giving our students the tools they need to be good stewards of our environment and great advocates for its future.
 - a) Guiding questions include: What are the current issues facing the world's environment? In what ways do my actions help or hurt the environment? How do politics influence environmental policies? How can I be an advocate for earth?
 - b) Competencies include: Developing a knowledge of science and engineering practices, understanding discipline specific core ideas, synthesizing core ideas to make connections across course topics, learning and utilizing the scientific method.
- 4. **Algebra-** This algebra course is intended to help students develop number literacy, problem-solving skills, and real-world application skills.
 - a) Course topics include: The number system, expressions and equations, functions, statistics and probability.
 - b) Mathematical Practices:
 - (1) Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
 - (2) Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
 - (3) Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
 - (4) Model with mathematics.
 - (5) Use appropriate tools strategically.
 - (6) Attend to precision.
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C. Experiential Education Programs

1. At the end of the day, the goal of the 7th and 8th grade program is designed to help students fall in love with inquiry, exploration, and learning. While our core content areas support students on the above journey, our location and flexible schedule allow us to engage students in experiential learning which also helps them to develop those aforementioned dispositions. Some example programs include:
 - a) Arts excursions to local museums, exhibits, and shows.
 - b) Engineering projects in conjunction with Burke Mountain
 - c) Community service projects in the greater Burke area
 - d) Environmental advocacy projects
 - e) Student generated experiential experiences

III. Assessment

Burke Mountain Academy prides itself on its narrative evaluation of student achievement. In the 7th and 8th grade program, students will receive feedback from teachers twice over the course of the Winter Term. These evaluations will consist of both feedback regarding character development and classroom dispositions, as well as feedback on progression towards grade course competencies. Over the course of the Winter Term, students may also receive numerical feedback on quizzes and tests, as well as rubric based feedback for writing-based assessments or presentations. The official transcript sent back to sending schools, however, will be narrative based.

IV. Notes

All core content areas are designed utilizing state and national standards as guidelines. All course themes are subject to change based on the expertise of the 7th and 8th grade teaching faculty.

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