

**PETERS TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**Student's Course Selection Information**  
**2020-2021**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

On the course selection sheet, you will find teacher recommendations made for your child for the upcoming school year. Questions regarding recommendations should be directed to your child's subject area teacher. Parents and students are to complete the section regarding the selection of music performance and world language classes. Course descriptions are found on the attached sheets.

As you review this packet, please be aware of the following:

1. There are eight class periods, a homeroom and a lunch period in a student's day.
2. Four periods are dedicated to the core subject areas for eighth grade. All students are required to take Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, and Math.
3. Two classes per day (2 periods) will be scheduled in three, twelve-week rotations for Art, Computer Based Applications/GOAL 8, Physical Education, Technology Education, Music, and Literature Foundations\* or Literature Studies\*. Please note: If your child has scored basic or below basic on previous PSSA assessments, he/she **will be** required to attend a tutorial class as part of his/her Practical and Fine Arts rotation in preparation for Grade 8 assessment tests.
4. One period will be scheduled for students who qualify for Reading or World Language as determined by the PSSA results, student's grades, and teacher recommendation.
5. One period may be used to schedule a music performance class (Band, Orchestra, Chorus), Learning Support\*, and/or Gifted Support\* -- opposite study lab as determined by the student's needs and interests. A student may participate in two of these classes. Students participating in only one of these classes will have a study lab every other day; students participating in none of these classes will have a study lab every day. Note: Band and Orchestra meet at the same time; therefore, a student cannot participate in both.

\* Participation in these classes requires that the students meet criteria; please review the Course Request Sheet to find your child's assignments for next year. Criteria for Algebra I, Literature Studies, and recommendations for Reading are defined later in this packet. Learning Support and Gifted Support are determined by Individual Education Plans.

RETURN the Course Request Sheet to your SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER BY: *March 26th,*  
*2020*

**PETERS TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL  
COURSE DESCRIPTION INFORMATION  
2020-2021**

Please refer to the Core Body of Knowledge for an on-line description of the following courses.

## **CORE CLASSES**

### **SCIENCE**

During 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students will take an inquiry based approach as they utilize STEM and 21<sup>st</sup> century science skills to study eight different units that relate to real life. Students will gain knowledge needed to collect and express data in the scientific community during the measurement and metric system unit. In the weather unit, students will learn how to predict and explain weather patterns. During the water and other resources unit, students will gather scientific data using probes and other related equipment to determine if the freshwater ecosystem behind the school is environmentally healthy. The interactions of life unit covers a range of topics including wetlands, and biotic and abiotic factors that affect the quality of the environment. Through the examination of the three physics units, students will investigate laws of motion, work, and simple machines, as well as, characteristics of mechanical waves, sound, electromagnetic waves, and light. In the animal diversity unit, students will be introduced to modern classification systems and unique animal characteristics.

Students will have many opportunities to engage with the process of science – to ask questions, collect and analyze data, and draw conclusions. Students will develop a set of problem solving skills that can be applied in many facets of life, in particular as an educated consumer of science. By participating in structured group activities, students will have opportunities to further develop cooperative group work and communication skills.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

In Social Studies 8, students will undertake a study of both geography and American History. For the first six weeks of Grade 8, students will study the geography of Central and South America. This will include movements of people, historical aspects of the region as they relate to geography, and demographics of the region today. For the remainder of the school year, students will study American History from the Reconstruction Era through World War II. Social Studies 8 will require the student to analyze and synthesize information from texts and supplemental materials. Students will be exposed as well to current events through class discussions.

### **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**

English Language Arts 8 is a course for all students; it asks the students to employ higher-level thinking skills, such as application, analysis, and evaluation according to the PA state standards. The students will move quickly through complicated concepts. Thesis statements and various forms of essay writing, including text-dependent analysis, will be practiced early on, and those formats will be used several times throughout the course of the year as students work toward mastery level. During the Shakespeare, etymology, short story, poetry, and Holocaust units, higher-level questioning and activities, along with application level vocabulary tests, will be used. Tiered activities will be available to meet various learning styles, and instruction will be differentiated. Twenty-first century learning skills will be employed during all of these units. Students will also continue to practice researching skills which will help them to locate credible sources and avoid plagiarism.

**MATHEMATICS**

Students currently enrolled in Pre-Algebra will be placed in Algebra I Academic, an on-grade level course. In grades 7 and 8, students are grouped for instruction:

**Algebra I Enriched**

This course focuses on developing problem solving skills by making and justifying generalizations based on their experiences with fundamental algebraic concepts. Linear and quadratic functional relationships are examined in a variety of problem situations, and these functions form the basis for the study of equations and the development of algebraic skills. Students use a variety of representations such as concrete, numerical, algorithmic, and graphical. This course addresses the essential knowledge and skills for first year honors algebra, at a faster pace with greater depth and a broader scope with higher expectations for student performance.

**To advance from 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Pre-Algebra Enriched to Algebra I Enriched, a student must meet the following criteria:**

- Maintain at least a “B” average for the year OR
- Maintain at least a “C” average for the year with teacher recommendation. Teacher recommendation is based upon consistent assignment completion, work ethic and overall classroom performance.

**To advance from 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Pre-Algebra to Algebra I Enriched, a student must meet the following criteria:**

- Maintain at least a 95% average on tests and quizzes for the year.
- Receive teacher recommendation. Teacher recommendation is based upon consistent assignment completion, work ethic and overall classroom performance.

**NOTE TO STUDENTS & PARENTS: The pace is quicker and the assessments are more rigorous in the enriched math classes at the middle school. This will often require a greater time commitment from students as they prepare for class exercises and examinations.**

**Algebra I Academic**

Algebra I Academic is the study of the language, concepts, and techniques of algebra that will prepare students to approach and solve problems following a logical succession of steps. This course is the foundation for the high school math courses. Topics include simplifying expressions, evaluating and solving equations and inequalities, and graphing linear and quadratic functions and relations. Real-world applications are presented within the course content and a functional approach is emphasized. The pacing of this course is slower than the enriched to allow for more remediation and review as well as one-on-one help within the classroom. Students will have more hands-on practice within the classroom so that students can receive immediate feedback.

## Algebra Fundamentals

Algebra Fundamentals is the study of the language, concepts, and techniques of algebra that will prepare students to approach and solve problems following a logical succession of steps. This course is designed to prepare students for Algebra I in high school. Topics include simplifying expressions, solving, graphing, and writing equations, graphing linear equations, and applying geometry formulas to solve problems. Real-world applications are presented within the course. The pacing of this course is slower than the academic course to allow for more remediation and review as well as one-on-one help within the classroom. Students will have more hands-on practice within the classroom so that students can receive immediate feedback.

### **NOTE TO STUDENTS & PARENTS:**

**To be enrolled in Algebra Fundamentals, a student must meet the following criteria:**

- Lower than 70% in Pre-Algebra Academic OR
- “D” grades in Quarters 3 and 4 OR
- “D” test average for the year OR
- Below Basic on the PSSA OR
- Recommendations by student’s IEP team
- Teacher recommendation

**If a student fails Pre-Algebra, the student may enroll in an approved math summer course and, with a passing grade, schedule Algebra I Fundamentals. If the student fails the approved summer course or does not enroll in a math summer course, they will be placed in Pre-Algebra.** Grade 7 students **CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN ALGEBRA I Enriched** will schedule Honors Geometry in Grade 8.

## WORLD LANGUAGE 8

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students continue their language study from 7<sup>th</sup> grade and enroll in Level 1B of the same language. Level 1B is a continuation of the 1A course. Students are exposed to additional vocabulary and grammatical concepts providing them opportunities to expand their knowledge of the target language. Further exploration of cultural components enhances the language learning experience. After successful completion of Level 1B, students enroll in Level II of the same language at the high school. Successful completion of the Level 1A course, in which the student maintained at least a “C” average, and teacher recommendation are prerequisites for the Level 1B course. However, World Language teachers strongly encourage students to maintain a 75% average or higher in Level 1A in order to continue on and perform successfully in Level 1B. If a student has not successfully completed Level 1A, he/she may repeat that course or elect to take 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading.

If a student took Reading in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, achieved proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA ELA, and was recommended by the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Reading teacher to begin a World Language, the student may select the Level 1A language of his/her choice.

## **READING**

This novel-based course meets every day all year and provides opportunities for students to develop greater competence and confidence in their reading, study skills, and critical-thinking abilities. Students will read four novels in this course: *The Cay*; *The Outsiders*; *Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie*; and *Run, Boy, Run*, as well as various shorter works of fiction and non-fiction. Focus is placed on improving and integrating vocabulary skills through verbal and written expression; improving reading comprehension using sequencing, summarizing, comparing and contrasting elements; analyzing and applying literary terms during writing and class discussion; and using hands-on activities to enhance students' ability to characterize, make inferences, solve analogies, and make personal connections with the text.

The following criteria are used to determine placement in Reading:

- All students who have scored Below Basic or Basic on the Grade 6 PSSA ELA assessment will be placed in Reading. Once Grade 7 PSSA scores become available in mid-summer, administrators, teachers, and school counselors will review them for updated final reading placements.
- Final grade in 7<sup>th</sup> grade Reading
- Teacher recommendation

Students who score Basic or Below Basic on the PSSA ELA will be enrolled in Reading in Grade 8. Students enrolled in Reading will not take a World Language.

## **PRACTICAL & FINE ARTS CLASSES**

### **ART 8 (PROPOSED)**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade art program is provided to students every day for a 12 week rotation throughout the school year. The program incorporates the basics of art education with exploration into both 2-D and 3-D media. An examination of art criticism/history, color theory, drawing, design, digital media and sculpture/ceramics are the main areas of emphasis. Some of the materials may include, but are not limited to, pencil, pastels, paints (tempera, watercolor and/or acrylic) and sculptural materials (clay, wood, and plaster.)

### **Art Exploration**

Students are enrolled in this class by teacher invitation only. Students will explore the creation, history, and aesthetics of advanced methods and art techniques in such areas as acrylic painting, drawing, sculpture, and architecture. Field trips to museums are often included in this class. Students are selected by a consistent and well developed body of work, a productive work ethic, positive attitude, and mature behavior during their 7<sup>th</sup> grade art rotation. Selection is limited and by the teacher's discretion only.

**Invitations will be mailed in April. Parents MUST return signed slips to the School Counseling Office to have their child enrolled in Art Exploration.**

### **Art Lab**

Art lab is an optional Study Lab assignment open to Art Exploration students only for the entire year. Homework and studies will be the top priority. Students will have the option to complete Art Exploration assignments during the first rotation and will have the option to explore other free choice projects during the second and third rotations. Students will be asked to note any other 11th period activities they are involved in. Art Lab permission slips must also be submitted.

## **LITERATURE**

All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are required to take a 12 week literature course as part of their practical and fine arts rotation.

### **Literature Foundations**

This 12 week literature-based course offers students in-class guided and out-of-class assigned reading as they explore critical thinking skills, learn new vocabulary, and apply their skills in oral and written expression. *All students will be scheduled for Literature Foundations unless they meet the criteria for Literature Studies.*

### **Literature Studies**

The purpose of this course is to provide opportunities for students to read and react to three different novels. The focus of this class is to develop students' higher-level thinking skills via class discussions and applied critical thinking. Creativity in both oral and written expression will be encouraged through a variety of activities and assessments. This is a required course for qualified students who meet criteria; it meets every day for twelve weeks.

Placement criteria for Literature Studies:

- "A" average in Language Arts
- Proficient or Advanced Grade 6 PSSA ELA Score
- Demonstration of effective work/study skills
- Teacher recommendation by Language Arts/Reading Teacher

Students must meet all criteria to qualify.

## **COMPUTER-BASED APPLICATIONS 8: Intro to Entrepreneurship & Computer Science**

Using a project-based learning approach, students will complete a six-week course in advanced computer applications, programming entrepreneurship and digital citizenship. Students will develop basic computer programming skills using Scratch software to write a video game program; use web-based software to design and format a website and format a five-part business plan for an entrepreneurial venture. Emphasis is on the application of learned skills to become digitally responsible citizens in the creation of multimedia projects using 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies.

## **GOAL 8**

In GOAL 8, students will participate in learning activities to analyze factors which impact their healthy transition toward adulthood. Healthy communication, the decision –making process, and family role/responsibilities will be units which emphasize skill development. The students will also utilize Smart Futures, an online interactive software program, which allows students to connect their skills and preferences with related careers and career clusters. Students will be able to produce a career portfolio, research and complete a presentation on a career of their interest and also explore financial literacy and community responsibility.

## **MUSIC**

All eighth grade students are required to take a music class every day for twelve weeks. They must choose from the following four courses. A description of each course is listed below.

**Vocal Music 8** – This course focuses on developing skills in good choral singing techniques and sight reading of two-part and three-part musical scores. Opportunities are provided for group and solo performance in the classroom. A wide variety of styles of music literature are explored. Some of the course goals are to: develop musical literacy; explore and develop the voice and explore and develop skills using computer music software. **Students taking this course are encouraged to also sign up for Chorus under the performance music section.**

**Strings-Instrumental Music 8** – This course will offer continuing development of orchestral playing skills in a large ensemble rehearsal and performance setting. Strings-Instrumental Music class is only for students who have experience in playing a strings instrument. **This course is only for students who are also taking Orchestra as a performance music class. It is by teacher recommendation only.**

**Comprehensive Music** - This course provides a variety of musical experiences. The program is specifically aimed at continuing to develop general music abilities through piano and vocal performance and creative music abilities. The course is structured to build on the seventh grade and elementary music experiences in learning to read and write music as well as listen to a variety of musical forms and styles. Some of the course goals are: to develop a musical literacy, explore and develop skills using electronic multi-timbral, programmable keyboard instruments, explore the voice and the music theater genre, and to explore and develop skills using computer music software. **This course is for students interested in a general music course who do not plan to take Band, Chorus or Orchestra.**

**Jazz Band** - **Students are enrolled in this class by teacher recommendation only.** Jazz band is a twelve week performance course that is offered in place of 8<sup>th</sup> grade Comprehensive Music. In addition to playing a wide variety of styles from early swing through modern rock, the student will begin to explore and develop basic improvisational skills. The class is for current instrumental students and any individual who plays lead guitar, bass guitar or piano (by audition). Upon meeting the established performance criteria, students will be enrolled and receive a confirmation notice.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The middle school physical education program is provided to students every day for twelve weeks. Emphasis is placed on physical fitness, team sports, and lifetime sports. Grade 8 students may participate in Texas football, table tennis, cooperative games, basketball, pickleball, volleyball, field hockey, and fitness units.

**TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING EDUCATION**

TEE (Technology Engineering Education) 801 & 802, “Creating Technology” is a twelve-week course for all eighth graders. It builds upon the skills learned in the twelve weeks of required Technology Engineering Education in seventh grade. Pennsylvania State Standards have been adopted for the study of “The Seven Designed Worlds” 1. Medical Technologies 2. Agriculture and Related Biotechnologies 3. Energy and Power Technologies 4. Information and Communication Technologies 5. Transportation Technologies 6. Manufacturing Technologies 7. Construction Technologies.

TEE 801 & 802 is an activity based curriculum divided into two, consecutive, six week classes housed in two different labs with two different instructors. The two labs are designed around the study of “The Seven Designed Worlds”.

The Manufacturing Technology lab provides students with the opportunity to participate in contemporary manufacturing systems. Students will both physically and digitally collaborate with partners from the “8<sup>th</sup> Grade Computer Apps Intro to Entrepreneurship and Computer Science” and “8<sup>th</sup> Grade Technology Engineering – Digital Communications” course, identifying a centralized product for development. The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Technology Engineering – Manufacturing Technology class will go through the development of a cardboard mock-up and completion of a product prototype. The use of tools and machinery and cross collaboration is a major component of the course.

The Information and Communication Technology lab provides students with the opportunity to participate in contemporary informational systems. Students will both physically and digitally collaborate with partners from the “8<sup>th</sup> Grade Computer Apps Intro to Entrepreneurship and Computer Science” and “8<sup>th</sup> Grade Technology Engineering Manufacturing and Prototyping” courses, identifying a centralized product for development.

The “8<sup>th</sup> Grade Technology Engineering Digital Communications” will go through the development process of a video to meet a central goal. The use of Digital Video Editing, and cross collaboration is a major component of the course.

In both labs, the students will focus on creating technology, classroom, lab and tool safety, recycling, computer applications, digital collaboration, technical sketching and drawing, desktop publishing, and environmental issues. Students will discuss the impacts of various technology systems, practice teamwork, apply mathematics and measurements, conduct research, and practice writing and designing skills.

**PSSA TUTORIAL COURSES****PSSA Math Prep - Grade 8**

This PSSA remediation course is for students who score Basic or Below Basic on the previous year’s PSSA Math. The course is designed to target current assessment anchors and increase student exposure to the structure and content of the PSSA tests.

Administrators and school counselors will assign students to this course in August if the student’s PSSA Math score is Basic or Below Basic. The school counselors will adapt the student’s schedule to accommodate the 30-day rotation within one of their two elective periods. For example, a student may be assigned a 30-day rotation of Technology Education and 30 days of PSSA Math.

**Writing Workshop - Grade 8**

This remediation course is for students who score Basic or Below Basic on the 7th Grade ELA PSSA and/or have been identified by need demonstrated in Language Arts class or by a student’s IEP team.

Depending upon the number of students, a class may be scheduled in the first trimester and second trimester. During 8<sup>th</sup> grade course selection in early March, Language Arts teachers will recommend students for either Writing Workshop or Literature based upon criteria.



## **PERFORMANCE MUSIC**

**Band** - This elective will offer continuing development of instrumental playing skills in a large ensemble rehearsal and performance setting. Students meet every other day. Musical instrument practice is required. Band class is only for students who have experience playing a musical instrument. After school performances and district scheduled events are a part of this course. Students enrolled in band are expected to participate throughout the school year.

**\*\*\* If recommended, students in Band should select Jazz Band as their 12 week required Music course**

**Chorus** – This 8<sup>th</sup> grade elective offers a continuation of developing skills in good choral singing techniques and sight reading of two-part and three-part musical scores. Opportunities are provided for group and solo performance. A wide variety of styles of music literature are explored. Some of the course goals are to: develop a musical literacy, explore and develop the voice and explore and develop skills using computer software. After school performances and district scheduled events are a part of this course. Students enrolled in chorus are expected to participate throughout the school year.

**\*\*\* Students in Chorus should select Vocal Music as their 12 week required Music course.**

**Orchestra** – This elective continues the development of string playing techniques in an ensemble setting with emphasis on mastery of skills, translation of symbols, interpretation of the music, and performance in class and before the public. Musical instrument practice is required. After school performances and district scheduled events are a part of this course. Students enrolled in Orchestra are expected to participate throughout the school year.

**\*\*\* Students in Orchestra should select Strings-Instrumental Music as their 12 week required Music course.**

