



Grade 8 Course Handbook 2024-2025

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Inspire a caring community to ignite learning, innovation, and success for all.

- Jordan Public Schools Mission Statement

Jordan Public Schools believe in the potential of every learner and that education enables future opportunity and success. We accept the responsibility of providing an educational system that positions our graduates with the knowledge, understanding, skills, and character traits they need to fulfill their individual promise for success and achieve their personal best. They deserve a school program grounded by a compelling purpose and our best efforts to achieve it.

Jordan Middle School provides a learning environment that nurtures the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs of 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. The staff provides challenging courses for all students and opportunities for students to explore new interests, comprehensive personal wellness education, a safe school environment, and a personalized school climate that provides support and adult guidance.

Adolescence is a distinctive developmental stage characterized by significant growth and change. Experts tell us that adolescence today starts earlier and lasts longer than in previous generations. Understanding the adolescent experience is foundational to creating and implementing a successful middle level education system. In developing our middle school program, we paid particular attention to the following areas:

- Physical Development/Brain Development - Bodies and brains of adolescents grow and mature. They face coordination issues and restlessness. Their brains are refining and pruning some connections and strengthening others as their abilities to plan, reason, anticipate consequences, pay attention, and make decisions continue to develop.
- Intellectual Development - Reasoning, understanding and the ability for abstract thought grows significantly. To make sense of the world, adolescents prefer real-life learning experiences in areas they find useful or interesting.
- Social Development - Interest and capacity for more mature interaction with groups and individuals may not develop at the same speed as bodies and intellect. Adolescents need to belong; they test limits; they want to be like their peers.
- Emotional/Psychological Development - Adolescents are searching for their own independent, adult identity. They may be moody or restless; they are frequently self-conscious and highly sensitive to criticism. They are likely to believe their experiences and feelings are unique.
- Moral/Ethical Development - The ability to make positive choices grows in adolescence. This involves a transition from a focus on self to considering the rights and feelings of others. Idealism and a strong sense of fairness develop, along with a set of personal values. Shades of gray in moral issues may replace what has always appeared black and white.

We believe understanding adolescent development and brain research supports our focus on relevance, choice, real-life experiences, and positive relationships. It makes full consideration of these issues a necessity for a successful middle level school program. We will respond to these adolescent development issues and their environmental, curricular, and instructional implications through the core principles and strategies that guide our work.

Middle School Mission:

The mission of our Middle School is to foster a culture of belonging and to inspire high expectations for achievement through instructional practices that embrace individual differences and learning styles. The middle school provides an environment that allows transition for students as they move from elementary into high school years. Middle school education provides solid standards-based interdisciplinary core courses and diverse exploratory and elective options with the goal of preparing students for Jordan High School and beyond.

- **Core Curriculum**

- Jordan Middle School will build on the foundational personalized core developed at Jordan Elementary School with interdisciplinary standards-based core instruction. Grade level teams will collaborate on interdisciplinary instruction in the areas of reading, language arts, science, social studies, and math. Advanced and remedial courses are offered for students to meet their instructional needs.

- **Exploratory Courses**

- The goal of exploratory courses at the middle school level is to provide a diverse exploratory option for ALL students at JMS. These courses capitalize on the curiosity of middle school level learners while exposing them to a wide range of topics in order to discover new ideas or skills they may not know they have.

- **Elective Courses**

- Elective courses at Jordan Middle School are taught with the goal of providing student choice to expand and explore student interests. These courses include choices such as band and choir.

- **Academic Support Courses**

- Students not meeting grade level standards will be scheduled into a support course(s) to address the identified need. These students will have the option of choosing an exploratory/elective course once this need has been addressed.

- **Advisory**

- Advisory is a class designed to encourage team building, school participation, and serve as a support system for students at Jordan Middle School. Curriculum for Advisory is designed to support students with their social/emotional, academic, and college & career readiness needs.
- Students will participate in weekly Social Emotional activities provided by the Student Support Team during advisory. These activities will center around building skills in the areas of academic success, character building, coping strategies, and other tools to address student needs.
- All students will be assigned to an Advisory class and advisor for the entire year. Students will meet in Advisory daily but will not earn grades in this class.

What is the scheduling process for 8th grade?

The registration process for middle school students is very straightforward. Below are the important details:

- In 8th grade, students will automatically be scheduled into grade level core and exploratory classes.
 - Students will be placed into academic support classes following spring testing to ensure proper placement.
 - Criteria outlined in the course handbook will be followed.
 - There is an appeals process located at the end of the registration materials that must be completed should you choose to appeal your student's course placement.
- Elective courses are scheduled based on the number of students who requested the course.
 - If a student does not get scheduled into their elective course, they will be placed into their alternate course selection at that time.

What should I do to register my 8th grader?

- If your student was enrolled in Jordan Public Schools for the current school year, their enrollment is automatically rolled forward for the upcoming academic year.
- Decide whether or not your child will continue their performance music elective.
 - Choir (Every Other Day)
 - Band (Every Other Day)
 - Band and Choir
- Once finalized, register your 8th graders for other elective courses, if needed.

Sample Student Schedule

Grade 8

1	Advisory	
2	Science	
3	Language	
4	Social Studies	
5	Math	
6	Lunch and WIN (What I Need) <small>*Students in band and/or choir will have these classes in place of WIN</small>	
7	Exploratory Hour 1	
	Physical Education	Health
8	Exploratory Hour 2	
	STEAM 8	Industrial Education
9	Elective Hour Options	
	HS Spanish 1 (Full Year) OR	
	Elective Option #1 (See Below)	Elective Option #2 (See Below)

*Actual placement of elective and exploratory courses will be finalized with the development of the master schedule.

CORE COURSES

(All course offerings for Jordan Middle School are subject to change based on final budget reductions.)

Language Arts 8	<i>Full Year, Every Day</i>
Language Arts 8 is a standards driven class where students complete journals, essays, read a variety of literature, perform a wide range of writing assignments, focus on vocabulary development, and study grammar as well as usage. Literature genres include poetry, short stories, non-fiction, novels, mythology, and folklore.	

Science 8	<i>Full Year, Every Day</i>
Physical Science is a study of the basics of chemistry and physics that is primarily focused on matter and energy. The course is organized around the concept that science is a body of knowledge as well as an investigative process. Appropriate activities, projects, and lab experiments are used to accomplish that goal. Science 8 aligns with and covers the Minnesota Academic Standards. At the end of the year, the students will be assessed on their knowledge of science topics covered in the 6th through 8th grades on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) in Science.	

Algebra 1	<i>Full Year, Every Day</i>
Algebra 1 is based on the Minnesota Standards for Mathematics in the areas of number and operation, algebra, geometry and measurement, and data analysis, with a strong emphasis on algebra. Topics include writing and solving linear equations and inequalities, graphing points and lines, finding slope and y-intercept, evaluating square roots, working with exponent rules, and manipulating polynomials.	

Social 8	<i>Full Year, Every Day</i>
Social 8 features geography as the lead discipline with a strong secondary emphasis on contemporary world history. Like all other social studies classes K-12, content is drawn from citizenship and government and economics. This is what gives the class the actual title of <i>Global Studies</i> . Students will explore the regions of the world through a variety of resources and participate in civic discussion, research, and presentations. Global Studies aligns with and covers the Minnesota Academic Standards.	

EXPLORATORY COURSES

The goal of exploratory courses at the middle school level is to provide a diverse exploratory option for ALL students at JMS. These courses capitalize on the curiosity of middle school level learners while exposing them to a wide range of topics in order to discover new ideas or skills they may not know they have.

Physical Education 8	<i>Full Year, Every other Day</i>
In this course, students will have the opportunity to participate in physical activity in a variety of settings including individual and team sports, cooperative games, and fitness based activities. Every effort will be made to help each student recognize significant gains in their overall fitness level as they learn sportsmanship, improve self-esteem, and have fun engaging in physical activity.	

STEAM 8	<i>Full Semester, Everyday</i>
This is the final middle school STEAM course. Students will work through projects regarding Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. In order to solve these problems students will use the Design Process to empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, and implement their ideas. Students will have the opportunity to use a variety of digital tools to solve real world problems.	

Industrial Technology	<i>Full Semester, Everyday</i>
The course will focus on the Project Lead the Way Design and Modeling modules. In these units, students use solid modeling software to introduce students to the design process. Utilizing this design approach, students understand how solid modeling has influenced their lives. Students also learn sketching techniques and use descriptive geometry as a component of design, measurement, and computer modeling. Using design briefs or abstracts, students create models and documentation to solve problems.	

Health 8	<i>Full Year, Every other Day</i>
<p>Students in Health 8 will cover the following topics: elements of health (mental-emotional, physical, social), health concerns in the U.S. (disease, obesity, accidents), responsible decision-making, physical fitness and exercise, weight management, eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia), drugs (tobacco, alcohol, inhalants, illegal narcotics, prescription, OTCs), drug misuse and abuse, treatment of drug dependency, first aid for common emergencies, sexually transmitted infections and abstinence, and first aid and CPR. The curriculum is age appropriate, designed to meet the needs of middle school level students, and focuses on real life applications.</p>	

ELECTIVE COURSES

Elective courses at Jordan Middle School are taught with the goal of providing student choice to expand and explore student interests. These courses include choices such as band and choir and classes to support individual student needs. Students not meeting grade level standards in reading and/or math will be scheduled into a class to address this need. These students will have the option of choosing an elective once they are meeting standard.

Band 8	<i>Full Year, WIN Time</i>
Band 8 students continue learning and developing instrumental musical skills. Students will explore a variety of music genres and styles and perform at four concerts throughout the year. Additional performance opportunities for Grade 8 band members include JMS Jazz Band and performing in small ensembles for the Parent/Grandparent Breakfast.	

Choir 8	<i>Full Year, WIN Time</i>
Choir 8 prepares students for successful singing at the high school level. Singers will begin to move beyond the basics of music literacy to balance and blend in a group setting. Singers will continue to learn about the mechanics of the singing voice, including the male changing voice. Students will prepare literature for three- and four-part voices. Students will continue to work on cooperation, dedication, and self-discipline with this performing group. There are four evening performances per year.	

Spanish 1 (High School Credit)	Full Year, Every Day
<p>This course is a year long course that will grant the student one (1) high school credit for Spanish I. Students will learn basic Spanish grammar, including pronouns, present and preterite (past) tense verb conjugations, spelling and accents, adjectives, and adverbs. Some of the vocabulary topics include describing people and things, school, house/room contents, likes and dislikes, time and date, free time activities, question words, weather, discussing problems, giving advice, talking on the phone, making plans, talking about meals, ordering in a restaurant, and clothing. Additionally, students will learn about the different Spanish speaking countries and their specific cultures and holidays. Students will listen, sing, and dance to Spanish music. By the end of Spanish 8, students have the potential to conduct basic communications about the topics discussed.</p> <p><u>Taking Spanish 1 in 8th grade means you are choosing to not take an elective/exploratory based on scheduling availability. Students wishing to continue with Band or Choir may do so during their WIN time.</u></p>	
Entrance Criteria	Exit Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of past data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ MCA: Meets or Exceeds on Reading ◦ FAST: Grade Level ◦ Teacher Recommendation • Parent/Student Permission form returned by due date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a B- average based off classroom standards • Exit criteria reviewed with classroom teacher, family, student, academic counselor, and administration.

Robotics & Coding	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>In this course, students participate in team-based projects in a fun environment. The typical student in this course is curious about science and his/her surroundings, is eager to acquire knowledge in the areas of science and mathematics, and is interesting in becoming more proficient at the language of coding to create online games and apps.</p>	

Introduction to Woods	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>This one semester elective course is designed to introduce middle school students to the field of woodworking and product design. Students will practice proper lab safety while gaining a basic understanding of woodworking and the proper use of hand and power tools. This class is hands-on from the design to the construction of a variety of traditional projects - some with a "high tech" twist. Technical demonstrations, safety procedures, design, and production of a product are some of the ways students will experience this area first-hand.</p>	

Forensics and Crime Scene Investigations	Full Semester, Every Other Day
Forensics is a one-semester investigative science and technology course. Using Scientific Inquiry Skills, students will learn how to observe, collect, analyze, and evaluate evidence found at crime scenes. The purpose of this course is to expose students to a variety of Forensic fields and careers.	
Drama 8	Full Semester, Every Other Day
Drama 8 is an introduction to fundamental acting and technical skills. Off-stage, students explore sound effects, makeup, costuming, and lighting. On stage, students learn movement and characterization skills. Students will participate in various activities that may include plays, improvisation, reader's theatre, and short scenes. Through these activities, Drama 8 students will learn physical and vocal presentation skills and develop basic knowledge of theatre arts. Near the conclusion of this course, students will perform what they have been working on for the semester.	
Creative Repurposing	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>Each and every day we use many different materials. Do you have an interest in finding new ways to use them and reduce the amount of items that end up in our landfills. Do you like DIY projects, flea market flip, Pinterest projects, and saving the environment? Then creative repurposing is the class for you! In this class, students will learn how to reuse and/or repurpose common items and also the basics of the 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) Throughout the semester, students will increase their awareness of items that are put in landfills and how landfills affect the environment. Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review the basics of 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) <input type="checkbox"/> Research ideas for repurposing common items <input type="checkbox"/> Repurpose an old, used, throw away item <input type="checkbox"/> Hear from local agencies that can provide more information on Hazardous Waste, Organic Recycling, Reuse, and conservation of our land. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a lesson to share with elementary age students to help guide their knowledge. 	
Fitness & Recreation	Full Semester, Every Other Day
The goal of this course is to motivate and teach students how to live a healthy lifestyle. Students will be given the opportunity to try many types of fitness activities. Also covered in this class will be the areas of nutrition, stress management, personal fitness plans, and goal setting.	

Food Science	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>In this course, students will explore science and math through cooking. We will conduct food science experiments and look at the role that science and math play within the foods that we prepare and eat. This will be a lab class, in which we will use the scientific method to conduct lab experiments with food. We will be in the kitchens as much as possible to discover how ingredients work, how food cooks, and the process of cooking. (Yes, you get to eat the food too!)</p>	
Drawing and Painting	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>If you have a passion for creating, this hands-on course is for you! In this course, students will explore different drawing and painting media to include graphite, colored pencil, charcoal, pastel, watercolor, and acrylic paints. The first half of the course will be spent on skill development, technique, and exploration. During the remainder of the course students will create artwork using the media and subject matter of their choice.</p>	
Ceramics and Sculpture	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>Want to get your hands dirty? Dig into this new art elective! This course is focused on three-dimensional art. Students will spend the first half of the course exploring different methods of making sculpture, to include clay, plaster, wood, and found objects. During the time students are working with clay, they will create various hand-built and wheel-thrown pieces, both functional and decorative, to include: plates, jars, vases, mugs, and serving dishes. During the second half of the course, students will create work using the media and subject matter of their choice.</p>	
Study Hall	Full Semester, Every Other Day
<p>Study Hall is an opportunity for students to complete their academic work during the school day.</p>	

ACADEMIC SUPPORT COURSES

EL	<i>Full Year</i>
<p>Only students whose first language is not English are eligible for this course. The level of coursework is based on the previous year's ACCESS scores. Students will have the opportunity to increase English language skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening with the goal of fluent academic and social language proficiency. Students will be given support in their core classes, as needed. Final grades will be posted on a pass/fail basis on student report cards.</p>	

Math Intervention 8	<i>Based on Student Need</i>
<p>The purpose of this course is to give students a boost in their basic math skills. As a large group, students will review the math lesson when needed and pre-teach upcoming lessons. The majority of time will be spent in small groups. In small groups, students will work on math skills that develop their basic math knowledge. Students will get extra math help for classroom assignments and extra practice on the Minnesota State Math Standards. This class is in addition to the students' core math class. Final grades will be posted on a pass/fail basis on student report cards.</p>	
Entrance Criteria	Exit Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of past data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MCA: Partially Meet Standard ○ FAST: Some/High Risk ○ Teacher Recommendation ○ Universal Screening Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MCA: Meets or Exceeds ● FAST: Grade Level ● Teacher Recommendation ● Universal Screening Data

Reading Intervention 8	<i>Based on Student Need</i>
<p>The purpose of this course is to give students a boost in their reading skills. In large group and small group settings, students will be supported on individual skills to assist in the progression toward grade level standards. This class is in addition to the students' core reading class. Final grades will be posted on a pass/fail basis on student report cards.</p>	
Entrance Criteria	Exit Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of past data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MCA: Partially Meet Standard ○ FAST: Some/High Risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MCA: Meets or Exceeds ● FAST: Grade Level ● Teacher Recommendation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher Recommendation ○ Universal Screening Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Universal Screening Data
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REACH	<i>Full Year, Every Day</i>
<p>REACH is an in-school program designed to help students academically, socially, and/or emotionally. The REACH Program not only supports these students academically, but also works to help them build life skills necessary for the future.</p> <p>Relationships: A safe place for students to belong, connect, and cool off if needed.</p> <p>Education: Individualized academic assistance and assignment modifications as needed.</p> <p>Accountability: A support network with staff committed to helping students succeed while nurturing student responsibility.</p> <p>Character: Skill-building activities that encourage positive academic and personal growth.</p> <p>Hard work: Students rise to the level of expectations.</p>	
Entrance Criteria	Exit Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of past data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student failing core subjects ○ Multiple missing assignments ○ Organizational needs ○ Attendance needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistent grades C or above ● Student-Teacher conference ● Staff recommendation ● Mandatory semester WIN monitor

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Applied Skills	<i>Based on IEP Minutes</i>
<p>Applied Skills is designed for students who have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). They have been identified as a student with a deficit in reading, writing, listening skills, math, oral expression, social skills, or study skills. Instruction is developed based on individual student needs. It is designed to teach students strategies to enable them to become successful in academic, social, and community settings. The students receive direct instruction in their identified skill area.</p>	

Positive Learning Understanding Self (PLUS)	<i>Based on IEP Minutes</i>
<p>PLUS class is designed for students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Students identified for this class have demonstrated a need for organizational skills, stress management, goal setting, test taking, social skills, self-advocacy, study skills, and problem solving skills. The instruction is developed based on each student's individual needs and will support students in their educational, emotional, and behavioral growth. It is designed to teach students strategies to enable them to become successful in academic, social, and community settings. The students receive direct instruction in their identified skill area.</p>	

Communication Strategies	<i>Based on IEP Minutes</i>
<p>This class is designed for students who have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Students identified for this class have demonstrated a need for communication skills, organizational skills, stress management, goal setting, test taking, social skills, self-advocacy, study skills, and problem solving skills. The instruction is developed based on each student's individual needs and will support students in their educational, communication, emotional, and behavioral growth. It is designed to teach students strategies to enable them to become successful in academic, social,</p>	

and community settings. The students receive direct instruction in their identified skill area.

Life Skills	<i>Based on IEP Minutes</i>
<p>This class is designed for students who have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Students identified for this class have demonstrated a need for functional skills, communication skills, organizational skills, stress management, goal setting, test taking, social skills, self-advocacy, study skills, and problem solving skills. The instruction is developed based on each student's individual needs and will support students in their educational, functional, communication, emotional, and behavioral growth. It is designed to teach students strategies to enable them to become successful in academic, social, and community settings as well as gaining independent skills. The students receive direct instruction in their identified skill area.</p>	
Speech and Language	<i>Based on IEP Minutes</i>
<p>This service is designed for students who have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) due to their communication and language needs. Scheduling is done on an individual basis.</p>	
Developmental Adapted Physical Education (DAPE)	<i>Based on IEP Minutes</i>
<p>DAPE is for students who qualify for the services through an assessment process. This class is for students who need to work on extra skills that are used in physical activities. We focus on lifelong health activities and skills that the student would be doing in their General Physical Education class. As a whole, we want the student to have more practice time to work on skills, so they can have more inclusion in their General Physical Education class.</p>	

Scheduling Appeals Process

Math Appeals

- Students must test out of the pre-requisite course using an end of course assessment in order to advance
- Follow [District acceleration criteria](#)

Appeals in ALL Other Disciplines

- If not initially invited into the course by initial identification, the student and parent(s) must:
 - Complete the written Appeal Request Form
 - Available from the building administration or counselors
 - Building Administrator(s) and school staff review the student's file including:
 - Core Data (as described above in Identification)
 - Other Supplementary Data, such as:
 - Subject-specific scores on standardized tests
 - Subject-specific grades and GPA (i.e. Math GPA, Science GPA, etc., NOT overall GPA)
 - Work samples
 - Building Administrator(s) reviews the student's file and supplementary data with parents
 - The Building Administrator will be the final authority on ALL appeals

Schedule Change Process

In order for a schedule change to be approved, your student needs to complete the following steps:

1. Speak with the teacher of the class wishing to be dropped.
2. Fill out the "Schedule Change Request" form, located in the main office with Mrs. Kochlin or Mrs. Meyer.
3. Mr. Bakeberg and Mrs. Meyer make final approval of the schedule change request
4. Requests are not considered after the course has been in session for one week.

Please note schedule changes will be considered up to the final day of the second week of the semester.