

Fieldston Middle School



Opening Fall 2007



JAMIE AKERS

The Bertsche academic centers in the middle school encourage collaboration and connection between faculty and students.

THE NEEDS OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION

In the last 10 years or more, research has shown that the developmental needs of early adolescents are different from those of young children or late teens. These students, ages 11 to 14 years old, come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, physically, intellectually, and socially. A good middle school program must support their differences and unique characteristics. As they emerge from childhood into adolescence, they need a secure place to succeed, fail, and develop their competencies and opportunities on all levels for engaging in their school, community, and the world.

PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

Fieldston Middle School will provide both a distinct educational experience and a thoughtful gradual transition between elementary school and high school. Our guiding concept is “the culture of consideration,” which we use to guide us in our behavior, decision-making, and planning. Culture of consideration defines the way we treat each other, the way we treat our environment, and the way we treat our responsibilities as students, teachers, and community members.

The curriculum has been deliberately designed to make this a continuous journey for our students, one that engages and excites, while providing a strong network of support.

There will be about 130 students per grade, with two “teams” per grade of 65 students each. There will be four dedicated core faculty for each team (math, English, history, and science). In addition, a team may be supplemented by foreign language, ethics, arts, and/or physical education teachers, learning specialist,

librarian, and technology integrator. Every student will be placed in an advisory with 11-12 other students. Advisories play an integral role in the student’s day, and the advisor is the primary support person for the student.

In addition to the curriculum, detailed in subsequent pages, there will be age-appropriate community service activities and extracurricular activities, including the popular sixth grade trip to Frost Valley.

THE NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM BUILDING

The architectural design of our new 48,000-square-foot academic building, located between Fieldston and Fieldston Lower, responds to the educational and developmental needs of middle school students. Each grade will have its own full floor with a central academic center for study, reading, small groups, etc. This common space encourages collaboration and connection, two aspects of learning that are especially important for early adolescents. The academic centers are named in honor of William N. Bertsche, our late beloved middle school principal, who envisioned these spaces as a key element in the new middle school, where students and faculty can interact. The building also includes dedicated science laboratories and a sixth grade art classroom. An exciting aspect of this “green building” is the “green” or vegetative roof, which will be partially accessible for teaching and research purposes.

The Fieldston playing fields seen from the green roof of the middle school.



MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

HISTORY

Each year of the history curriculum has been designed around a central thematic question.

Sixth Grade

Essential Question: What is the American identity?

With an emphasis on the use of primary materials, a multi-disciplinary approach and cooperative learning, sixth graders examine the issues, people, events, and movements that helped create what it is to be an American. Students study the struggles that occurred in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as individuals and groups fought to achieve the rights promised them in the Constitution. Units of study include industrialization, urbanization, and the labor movement.

Seventh Grade

Essential Question: Why do societies change?

This course begins by taking an anthropological look at social movements that aim to change the existing social order. The second half of the year follows the emergence of complex social hierarchies, from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle, studied through the lens of the San of the Kalahari to the advent of civilization in Mesopotamia.

Eighth Grade

Essential Question: Whose story is it?

Students examine the nature of historical perspective, through selected aspects of the achievements of the ancient Greek, Roman, Chinese, and Indian civilizations, the origins of Christianity, the gradual fall of the Roman Empire, the rise of medieval society, the growth of Islam, and the emergence of Moslem kingdoms in Africa.

ENGLISH

Each year of the curriculum ensures that all students have a common reading background and a shared experience in writing, usage, and grammar. Writing assignments include a mixture of critical and creative writing, with emphasis on the analytical essay.

Sixth grade

The curriculum complements the social studies curriculum and engages the students in a yearlong exploration of self-identity. The essential questions are: “Who am I as a person?” and “Who am I as a reader and writer?” Our program incorporates literature, written and spoken language, and specific skill development. The program seeks to develop student skills in reading comprehension, understanding of literary elements, grammar, spelling, and writing.



Natural light floods the interior spaces of the middle school classrooms.

Seventh Grade

Students learn a critical approach through exposure to a wide variety of literature—classic and contemporary short stories, novels, plays, and poetry. Students write across all genres with an emphasis on critical writing such as theme paragraphs and formal essays.

Eighth Grade

Students continue to address the essential question of how we successfully talk and write about literature, maintaining focus on human behavior and ethical questions that arise in our reading. Throughout the year, students read a variety of literature and write across all genres, with an emphasis on creativity and close analysis.

MATH

As they achieve content-focused goals, middle school math students will also develop essential habits of mind as well as problem-solving and collaboration skills.

Sixth Grade

Students will solidify their sense of number and fluency in the four major operations, expanding their understanding to include fractions, decimals, and percents as well as positive and negative integers. Students will learn to collect, organize, and analyze data and interpret graphs. They will also study two-dimensional geometry concepts and formulas in depth.

Seventh Grade

Students will develop a foundation in the core concepts of algebra. They will be introduced to the concept of change through exploring slope and graphing linear equations and inequalities on the coordinate plane. Students will extend their understanding of geometry to include 3D figures.

Eighth Grade

Students will complete an in-depth study of algebra, building on the work started in seventh grade and preparing for further study of higher-level algebra and geometry concepts.



STAN SCHNIER

Middle school science students explore the natural world around Fieldston.

SCIENCE

The science curriculum revolves around five major themes over three years. Under a sustainability umbrella, the themes of energy, matter, information, time, and space are threaded together via student experiences and explorations that ask the question, “How do scientists know what they know, and how do they do their work?”

Essential questions guide the work of student scientists in each grade level.

Sixth Grade

What is the interaction of organisms with their environment?
How do atmospheric conditions create the weather and affect human activities?

Seventh Grade

How do living things maintain homeostasis and stay alive?
How does genetic information get passed on?

Eighth Grade

How can you predict how and why something moves?
What is matter made up of, and how can we tell?
How do you investigate things you can't see?
How do matter and energy interact to form our world?

ETHICS

The middle school ethics program strives to help students navigate the transition from childhood to adolescence by providing opportunities to explore personal identity, diversity and difference, conflict resolution, moral integrity in decision-making, and support for making healthy choices in personal relationships and physical health. The students examine the issues through a combination of teacher-led and high school student-led peer discussions and activities.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Students develop proficiency in four basic skill areas (speaking, listening, reading and writing) through a curriculum that exposes them to the culture, literature, art, and history of the Chinese-, French-, and Spanish-speaking worlds. We also offer students the opportunity of taking Latin, beginning in sixth grade. Students beginning Latin in sixth grade continue through eighth grade and do not take additional languages. Alternatively, students who begin French, Spanish, or Chinese in sixth grade may add Latin in seventh grade.

The Chinese, French, and Spanish classes follow a similar curriculum with the same essential themes; Latin classes take a slightly different approach.

Sixth Grade

Self-Identity: Who am I? Students learn to describe themselves and their immediate world— home and family, likes and dislikes, friends and favorite activities. In Latin, students study basic grammar and focus on family life in ancient Rome.

Seventh Grade

Community Identity: Who am I in the community? Students learn to talk about themselves in relationship to society. In Latin, students complete basic grammar and investigate Roman political and military affairs.

Eighth Grade

Historical Identity: How do I relate to my past? Students learn to talk about their own personal histories as well as that of different Hispanic, Chinese, French, and Francophone cultures. In Latin, students are introduced to advanced grammar and explore the Latin literary landscape.

Seventh grade students practice writing Chinese characters.



JANE BREDECHE

ARTS

Visual Arts

The visual arts program is based on mastering the basic principles and techniques of the arts vocabulary as building blocks for creative work in various disciplines. Sixth graders engage projects in 3D, 2D, and design. In seventh grade, this work continues with the addition of model building. In eighth grade, students are offered a range of electives ranging from 2D art through ceramics and jewelry, sculpture, and architectural drawing. Photography and printmaking are other choices at this level.

Dance/Drama/Technical Theatre

Dance students explore the fundamentals of movement with an emphasis on individual and group improvisation and the elements of composition. Drama students dive into the basic principles of acting including focus/concentration, character study, collaborative work, improvisation, and scene study. Sixth grade students will have some introduction to dance/drama. Our technical theatre course introduces students to technical theatre production. All middle school students have an opportunity to participate in these areas of study as well as the middle school arts festival, the winter dance concert, and the middle school musical.

Music

The middle school music program provides students basic musical skills and knowledge and the discipline needed to achieve both short-term and long-term goals. It also promotes analytical thinking to solve real musical problems. Sixth and seventh grade work builds technical skills, theoretical understanding, and aesthetic maturity. Eighth grade work continues at a more advanced level. Middle school concerts and assemblies are highlights of the school year.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION & SPORTS

Sixth Grade

Students focus on skill development, tactical work, team play in competitive sports, and recreational activities. In the sports units, students are given instruction on the basics, placed on teams, and then compete in an intramural league. Fitness is incorporated into each lesson. Sport activities may include basketball, cross-country, field hockey (girls), flag football, Frisbee, lacrosse, soccer, softball swimming, track, volleyball, and weight training. Recreational activities may include basketball, flag football, floor hockey, frisbee, softball, pickle ball, badminton, speedball, and team-building games. All sixth grade students must pass the swim unit.

Seventh and Eighth Grade

Students continue their work on skills, tactics, fitness, cooperation, and competition. Classes meet five times per week. Fitness is incorporated into each

lesson. All students must successfully participate in the swimming unit. In addition to the required program, students may choose to participate in inter-scholastic sports. We will be starting a seventh grade interscholastic program that includes: soccer (boys), soccer (girls), field hockey, volleyball, football with eighth graders; basketball (boys), basketball (girls), swimming (boys and girls), ice hockey with eighth graders; baseball, softball, lacrosse (boys), and lacrosse (girls).

In eighth grade, teams are formed in the following sports: football (boys) with seventh graders, field hockey (girls), volleyball (girls), soccer (boys), soccer (girls); ice hockey (coed) with seventh graders, swimming (coed), basketball (boys), basketball (girls); baseball (boys), softball (girls), track (coed), lacrosse (girls), lacrosse (boys). Team practices are held during regular P.E. time and competitions are held after school. Seventh/eighth grade football will practice three days per week after school, days to be determined. Seventh/eighth grade ice hockey will practice after school at Riverbank State Park twice per week.

The new athletic complex, open January 2007, seen from the playing fields.



EXTERIOR RENDERINGS: MICHAEL McCANN

ABOUT OUR CAMPUS EXPANSION

In addition to our new middle school academic building, our campus expansion includes a new 38,000-square-foot gym/fieldhouse and 35,000 square feet of renovated space that will result in a new performing arts center, student commons, dining hall and kitchen, and admissions suite. The new athletic facility will be ready in January 2007; the other new facilities will be ready in the fall of 2007.

THE NEW ATHLETIC FACILITY

- ❖ 38,000-square-foot new gym/fieldhouse
- ❖ 12,000-square-foot pool building
- ❖ New double gym that allows for two simultaneous full-court basketball games
- ❖ New fitness center and training rooms
- ❖ Six-lane pool, competition length
- ❖ Pool spectator area for 100 people

THE NEW CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS

- ❖ 19,000 square feet of space
- ❖ Separate rooms for band rehearsal, chorus room, strings classroom
- ❖ Rooms for jazz, percussion, electronic music, and small piano rooms
- ❖ Dance/theater classroom, costume, and scene shop as well as prop storage
- ❖ Offices for music and performing arts faculty

THE NEW STUDENT COMMONS

- ❖ Available for daily student gatherings
- ❖ Suitable for occasional lectures, meetings of small groups, concerts, talks



A computer rendering of the new student commons.

ABOUT THE ETHICAL CULTURE FIELDSTON SCHOOL

“The ideal of the school is to develop individuals who will be competent to change their environment to greater conformity with moral ideals.”

—FELIX ADLER

THE ETHICAL CULTURE FIELDSTON SCHOOL was established in 1878 by the visionary Felix Adler, educator, social reformer, and founder of the New York Society for Ethical Culture. A firm believer in the power of education as preparation for life, Adler envisioned a broad curriculum that emphasized non-sectarian moral instruction, respect for the individual, and “learning by doing” – radical notions for the time and the very cornerstones of progressive education today.

Today the Ethical Culture Fieldston School serves 1,616 students on two campuses, one in Manhattan, and the other on 18 acres in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. In fall 2007, our two lower schools, Ethical Culture and Fieldston Lower will teach grades preK through 5; Fieldston Middle will teach grades 6 through 8; Fieldston Upper, grades 9 through 12.

Committed to academic excellence, progressive education, and ethical learning, ECFS has sustained the integrity of Adler’s original mission for over 125 years. With a diverse community and child-centered curriculum, the school offers a rich and challenging curriculum in the arts, sciences, and humanities.

FINANCIAL AID: ECFS has one of the largest financial aid programs of any independent day school in the country. For the school year 2006–2007, \$6.6 million was granted. About 21% of the students receive some sort of financial aid.

ENDOWMENT: \$53 million

DIVERSITY: 24% students of color

LANGUAGES TAUGHT AT FIELDSTON: French, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish for Native Speakers

For more information, contact:
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ETHICAL CULTURE FIELDSTON SCHOOL