



Middle School Explorations Classes, 2017-18

Each Thursday, Middle School students participate in Explorations classes in order to provide students with opportunities to explore a variety of learning experiences that fall outside of their core classes. The goal is to have smaller classes, classes that may be multi-grade level, and more opportunity for student choice.

Outdoor and Environmental Education (OEE): OEE is intended to teach students about sense of place, local ecosystems, as well as how to respectfully and responsibly enjoy the outdoors; create future stewards of the environment through weekly activities and field lessons; and culminate in a multi-night backpacking experience.

Chorus: In Chorus students will sing all kinds of different songs ranging from classical to pop and jazz. Students will have input in song choices, rehearsals, and performances.

SLAM: Service Learning @ McGillis: SLAM is all about hands-on community action! YOU will identify and research a challenge in our community, create a plan of action, share your ideas with our school community, and get off campus to help repair the world with your peers: *Tikun Olam!*

Journalism: In this class, students will become journalists! You will generate your own story ideas and choose the best media platform to tell the news that is important to you. In addition to writing stories, publishing a newspaper, recording a podcast, or creating content for an online news platform, students will explore some of the fundamental aspects of journalism – reporting, news writing, objectivity, the First Amendment, and media ethics.

Programming & Coding: In this hands-on, project-driven class, we will learn some basics of digital programming and coding. We will challenge our creativity in computational thinking and have a blast designing our own games, apps, websites, and more. No prior experience required – just an innovative spirit ready to create!

Speech & Debate and Academic Games: This class might be one of your most useful classes in middle school. Why? Because at some time in your life – including next year! – you will have to stand in front of a group of people and speak. You will be performing, thinking quickly on your feet, writing, debating, analyzing, and playing challenging games in this class.

Dance: Movement and Culture: Do you love to dance or want to learn some new moves? In this class, we will work on dance fundamentals, practice moves from traditional American dances such as square dance and hip hop, and choreograph our own pieces. Students will get the chance to pick a dance from around the world to explore and teach to others. From ballet to Bollywood, travel the world through movement, rhythm, and style.

Drama: *Typically students will rehearse one afternoon a week after school.* There are a few occasions where you might be asked to rehearse more, but only based on availability. To best prepare for the final productions, we *rehearse every afternoon the week before our shows.*

Shakespeare: We will have a blast in drama class doing improv games and diving into Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Join us in this outrageous comedy that has a battle of wit between Beatrice and Benedict, physical comedy with the bumbling detective, Dogberry, and his idiot helpers, and proves that love does indeed conquer all!

Purim: We will tell the story of Esther in our annual Purim Spiel, which involves crafting a script together, outlandish comic acting, having a tech day after school, building props and scenery, and performing in our readers' theatre piece in an All School Shabbat. We will also learn the importance of saying "yes" to moments on and off stage by playing improvisational games.

Musical Theatre: Learn how to weave the magic of singing, dancing, and acting all together in this powerful form of storytelling. Have fun as you build your confidence and work as a team on comic timing. Come share your talents and your passion for the stage as we play improvisational games, build props and scenery, and wow our audience at the end of the year!

Sport & Recreation: Students will gain an understanding and appreciation for lifetime sports and recreation, discovering that sport and recreation are essential to maintaining a healthy outlook on a physical, cognitive, emotional, and social level. Sport and recreation activities may include billiards, bowling, fly-fishing, golf, hiking, horseshoes, ice-skating, Pilates, Yoga, and Ultimate Frisbee.

Be The Change, Mindfulness: Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not." In this class, we will explore the beauty of each student through yoga, meditation, journal writing, and small art projects. Through the study of mindfulness, we will consider how to bring each student's unique strengths into the community, while connecting to the McGillis core values.

Digital Storytelling: Digital Storytelling is an exploration of what it means to be a media consumer and producer. Students will analyze the power of story as they produce original films.

Open Studio Art: You will have the opportunity to explore any type of art medium or technique that you wish. Before students begin work on their projects they are asked to submit a proposal explaining their idea and why working through the piece is important.

What do you know?: This is a philosophy and ethics class that centers around asking humanity's big questions. Among them are, "What can we really know about the world?", "Might I really be just a brain controlled by an evil scientist?", and "Should I ever lie to my parents?" We'll attempt to provide different answers – but not necessarily solutions. Be prepared for fun and lively debate!