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# ACADEMIC HANDBOOK

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STEEL VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

2020-2021

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## Mission Statement

The Steel Valley School District is rich in cultural diversity and unique in its heritage. The mission of the Steel Valley School District is for the school, home and community to collaborate to enable students to achieve academic standards, to encourage independent thinking and to become responsible citizens.

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## Vision Statement

The vision of the Steel Valley School District will continue to be viewed as community learning centers. Homes of students and residents will continue to be viewed as being part of the motivated learning community of students and adults. Academic standards and assessment anchors will function as the foundation of the educational program and students will be expected to master them. The standards and anchors will be integrated across the curriculum and students will be prepared to apply them in problematic situations. It is assumed in Steel Valley that as students acquire an understanding of the fundamental skills and content, they will display their talents as independent thinkers.

## Belief Statements

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The Steel Valley School District believes that . . .

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- An educated citizenry is the foundation for a democratic society.
- Students, family, school, and community all share in the responsibility for education.
- All people are capable of learning, and learning is a life-long process.
- All individuals have equal intrinsic worth.
- Our Educational Program will foster enrichment, creativity, and a sense of self-worth.
- Education is the primary means through which individuals and society create and adapt to change.
- The educational process requires active learning and innovation through the use of a wide variety of instructional methods and resources.
- High expectations, positive attitudes, and concerted effort directly affect performance, and form the keystone for the entire education process.
- Role models are valuable because they affect behavior, learning, and achievement.
- The respect of others is directly inter-related to the degree one respects oneself.
- It is important for people to learn to work together because life is primarily interdependent.
- A safe, stimulating, comfortable, caring, and attractive environment is conducive to learning.
- Effective governance and decision-making are based on mutual trust and respect and can be enhanced through a climate of open communications.
- Fiscal responsibility requires the judicious use of all available resources.
- Each person has his or her uniqueness, worthy to make special contributions.
- Education is the foundation for a democratic society to achieve.
- All people are capable of learning in a variety of ways, at different times, but continually throughout life.
- Children are the most important resource for a community.
- High expectations are critical for the success of education.
- Education should foster/enhance creativity.
- The level of expectations has a significant impact on the level of achievement.
- People need to get along with others.
- People need self-esteem.
- Self-esteem is a basic need similar to food and shelter.

## STRUCTURE OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL DAY

Every student will take the courses below although not necessarily in the order listed.

| Grade 5                                  | Grade 6                                  | Grade 7   | Grade 8   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Mathematics 5                            | Mathematics 6                            | Mathematics 7<br><i>or</i> Advanced Math 7<br>(Two periods daily)                                 | Mathematics 8<br><i>or</i> Algebra<br>(two periods daily)   |
| English-Language Arts 5                  | English-Language Arts 6                  | English-Language Arts 7<br><i>or</i><br>Advanced English-<br>Language Arts<br>(Two periods daily) | English-Language Arts 8<br><i>or</i><br>Advanced English-<br>Language Arts<br>(Two periods daily) |
| Science 5                                | Integrated Science 6                     | Integrated Science 7  | Integrated Science 8  |
| Social Studies 5                         | Geography                                | World History   | U.S. History  |
| Related Electives<br>One each nine weeks | Related Electives<br>One each nine weeks | 2 Related Electives<br>Two per quarter  | 2 Related Electives<br>Two per quarter  |
| Academic Reinforcement                   | Academic Reinforcement                   |   |   |

**SCHEDULING-** The administration and guidance department reserve the right to change student schedules based on aptitude and for the purpose of individual student achievement. Students will be made aware of any changes. Keep in mind that courses should be chosen that ensure each child may achieve academically and develop intellectually to his/her fullest potential. Any schedule changes must be requested before the first progress reports, and approved by an administrator. **Schedules will not be changed to arrange for a student to have a specific teacher, or to be in class with a specific group of students.**



# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS



## MIDDLE SCHOOL ELECTIVES:

Electives 5,6,7,8

### Middle School Band (Grades 5,6,7,8)

Various styles of band literature and difficulty of music are used to develop individual and group performance skills. Emphasis is placed on proper breathing, tone quality, intonation, articulation, development of range, music reading skills, and the understanding of music concepts in the theory of music and music composition. *Any student in MS Band is required to take this course for at least one of the two nine-weeks offered during the school year.* In addition, all band students are encouraged to take advantage of the afterschool ensemble rehearsals offered.

### Middle School Chorus (Grades 5,6,7,8)

***YOUR VOICE: UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES!***

The Middle School Chorus is a performing group of mixed voices from grades 5 through 8. Students are given the opportunity to develop the full range of their voice, establish good vocal technique and ear-training, achieve confidence, promote music appreciation and musicality by performing many different genres of vocal music. Each of the two nine-weeks culminates with an evening performance, ONE in December, and ONE in the spring. The Middle School Chorus also participates in several community outreaches throughout the year. No experience is necessary, just the love of music and singing!

### General Art (Grades 5,6,7,8)

Fifth and sixth grade art are a transition from elementary school art to middle school art. The students will study a variety of techniques, materials, cultures, and artists throughout history. The emphasis is placed on student development in certain areas and art vocabulary. In seventh and eighth grades, students develop awareness of their environmental experiences and how to use art to express those experiences. Many techniques and materials will be used to reach those aims while simultaneously improving students' skills and techniques. *This is a nine-week course.*

### Electives 7,8 Only

#### Art Elective (Grades 7,8)

This course is designed for those students who have a high interest in exploring a variety of forms of art. Students will use skills already learned in general art to build off of to create projects influenced by individual interests. A focus on more intensive, detailed projects will be emphasized throughout this nine weeks art course as students work through the design cycle. *Students must have passing grades in previous art courses in order to sign up for this class.*

#### Middle School Band

See description from 5,6,7,8

#### Middle School Chorus

See description from 5,6,7,8

#### Hip Hop: Fresh Beats (Grades 7 and 8)

***USING MUSIC OF THE PAST TO CREATE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE***

In this project-based course, students will be introduced to the history of hip hop beats, understand the skills necessary to create original beats and be given the opportunity to perfect the genre of "free style." Students will leave the course with an audio or digital portfolio of their work. *This is a nine-week course.*

### **Piano/ Keyboards (Grades 7 and 8)**

This is a perfect introduction to piano and music for those who have little to no experience or need a review of the very basics. You will learn how to read music, find notes on the piano and other essentials so you can begin playing pieces. *This is a nine-week course.*

### **Teen Life (Grades 7 and 8)**

Activities will change and vary by grade level and build each year. Students will develop preteen and teen survival skills that promote the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of their age group. Kitchen and food safety, cooking, careers, and money management are some general areas of focus. *This is a nine-week course.*

**TECH ED** – Tech curriculum varies by grade level. In early grades, it provides an introduction to technology, which includes the fundamentals of measurement, sketching, drafting, product design, marketing, and manufacturing. These basic skills will be taught using hands-on experiences with professional drafting and manufacturing equipment. Throughout middle school, this course expands on student vocabulary and knowledge of measurement, product design, and transportation, rocketry, manufacturing, and shop safety. Each grade level will learn the fundamentals of Photoshop, coding, robotics and the vocabulary associated with each. Students will monitor their learning through self-assessment and note taking. This is a nine-weeks course.

## **GRADE 7 & 8 ONLY ELECTIVES**

**EXPLORATORY RESEARCH-** This course is designed to further develop career awareness and give meaning to the students' secondary education. Students will continue to explore types of postsecondary education and career clusters. They will also explore soft skills including working in groups, interviewing, and speaking in public. The class is designed in conjunction with the PA state career standards, ESSA accountability, and Future Ready PA Index. All grade 7 & 8 students will take this class for a nine-week period.

**MATH 4 LIFE-** Students will review and engage in the world of business. Students will explore the workings of the Stock Market, strategize and speculate on risk vs. reward while investigating the history and function of the stock market in our economy. Additionally, students will learn and understand basic investing principles, about current events, the basics of how the economy works, money management skills, basic math and reading comprehension, writing skills, etc.

**MATH THROUGH SPORTS (Grade 7 only)-** In this elective, students will explore how math plays a role in sports. Sports and math are a natural connection. You can't have a game without numbers. Statistics are the result of every contest. Sports are an easy way to turn abstract math into something measurable and tangible.

**WRITING IS FUNDamental (Grade 7 & 8)-**This course is designed to have students engage in exploring various forms of writing. Students will learn how to write newspaper articles, short stories, poems, essays, and other forms of writing

**TEEN LIFE—** Activities will change and vary by grade level and build each year. Students will develop preteen and teen survival skills that promote the physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of their age group. Child development, cooking, and money management are some general areas of focus. In teen life, students will also continue career exploration by taking a variety of personality, ability, and interest surveys to match their traits to possible careers. This is a nine-weeks course.

\*\*\* Choices for electives may vary by grade level. Courses offered at the middle school level may vary year to year based on changes in core class periods and teacher availability.

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## GRADE 5 CURRICULLUM

The middle school fifth grade curriculum is an extension of the program of study taught on the elementary level. Students will have the same core subjects offered at the elementary schools, but in a middle school atmosphere. The core subjects will be rotated between within four core academic classrooms for each student. These subjects will include language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Content for each subject is aligned with the PA state standards for that specific area. The students will also be assigned four special classes. The order of elective classes will vary and rotate for each nine-week period.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR GRADE 6

**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS 6** - The student will recognize and understand correct grammar and usage and will be able to apply these skills for the development of written and oral communication through various works of literature. The course will focus on the writing process. The focus on spelling and vocabulary will help students develop an extensive vocabulary while learning the patterns and conventions of the English language. The focus on oral communication will aid students in the development of skills for listening and comprehension as well as self-expression in an organized, concise manner.

**MATH 6** - Math 6 is designed to build on previous material through extensions of mathematical concepts, fluency, practice, projects, applications, and rigor. The instructional time will focus on four critical areas of the PA Core Standards: (1) connecting ratio and rate to whole number multiplication and division and using concepts of ratio and rate to solve problems; (2) completing understanding of division of fractions and extending the notion of numbers to the system of rational numbers, which includes negative numbers; (3) writing, interpreting, and using expressions and equations; and (4) developing understanding of statistical thinking.

### Grade 6 Modules

Module 1: Ratios and Unit Rates

Module 2: Arithmetic Operations

Module 3: Rational Numbers

Module 4: Expressions and Equations

Module 5: Area, Surface Area and Volume

Module 6: Statistics

Emphasis will be on the following Standards of Mathematical Practice: making sense of problems, reasoning abstractly, constructing and justifying arguments, critique, modeling to represent and solve problems, using appropriate tools to investigate, and attending to precision. Other areas of development are collaboration, critical thinking, and communication of ideas.

**GEOGRAPHY 6** - This course will examine 3 broad topics: Geography, Civics and Early World History. In Geography we will explore the 5-Themes of geography through a variety of projects, discussion, and technology. In Civics, we will examine the role and function of local and state government, as well as local history. Early World History will encompass the examination of the Stone Age, Mesopotamia, and Ancient Egypt.

**INTEGRATED SCIENCE 6** - This course continues the students' exploration of the four main branches of science: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Physical Science. Students will participate in class work and hands-on activities based on the PA Science Standards. Each student will conduct labs to collect, analyze, and

interpret data. Students will use tools such as FOSS kits, Study Island, iPads for many hands on activities. Assessments are to be derived from the PA State Assessment Anchors and eligible content.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR GRADE 7

**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS 7 (Two Periods Daily)**– The student will use reading, writing, and language skills to communicate. These communication skills will be developed through a literature based curriculum, oral presentations, and projects. Additionally, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition will be integrated into this course.

**ADVANCED ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS 7 (Two Periods Daily)**– The student will focus on the development of written and oral language. The course of study includes grammar and literary concepts, note taking, research, vocabulary development, and continued writing instruction. Writing assignments will cover narrative, argumentative, informative, and literary analysis. Students will apply skills to writing and communication. The students will read works in addition to those covered in their literature text. This course has been designed to challenge students who have demonstrated a need for accelerated coursework in language arts.

*Prerequisites:* 80% or better of the total score of the combined data points

- Class grades
- Teacher Recommendation for 2020–2021 school year
- CDT score
- PVAAS Data

**MATH 7 (Two Periods Daily)**– Math 7 is designed to build on previous material through extensions of mathematical concepts, fluency, practice, projects, applications, and rigor. The instructional time will focus on four critical areas: (1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships; (2) developing understanding of operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations; (3) solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions, and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume; and (4) drawing inferences about populations based on samples.

### Grade 7 Modules

Module 1: Ratios and Proportional Relationships

Module 2: Rational Numbers

Module 3: Expressions and Equations

Module 4: Percent and Proportional Relationships

Module 5: Statistics and Probability

Module 6: Geometry

Emphasis will be on the following Standards of Mathematical Practice: making sense of problems, reasoning abstractly, constructing and justifying arguments, critique, modeling to represent and solve problems, using appropriate tools to investigate, and attending to precision. Other areas of development are collaboration, critical thinking, and communication of ideas.

**ADVANCED MATH 7 (Two Periods Daily)**– This fast-pace course is designed for students who demonstrate a strong mathematical aptitude. Similar to Math 7, students in Advanced Math 7 (formerly Pre-Algebra 7) will complete all of the PA Core Modules for Grade 7. In addition, they will complete the first two PA Core Modules for Grade 8 so that they are prepared for Algebra as 8<sup>th</sup> graders. It will also focus on a critical area from the Grade 8 PA Core: formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, including modeling an association in bivariate data with a linear equation, and solving linear equations.

*Prerequisites:* 80% or better of the total score of the combined data points

- Class grades

- Teacher Recommendation for 2020–2021 school year
- CDT score
- PVAAS Data

**WORLD HISTORY 7**— Students will continue to study the history of the Ancient World. Students will examine the effects that geography, religion, culture and government has had on the early civilizations that shape our world today. Topics will include China, Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, Early America, and the Age of Exploration.

**INTEGRATED SCIENCE 7** — This course continues the students’ exploration of the four main branches of science: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Physical Science. Students will participate in class work and hands-on activities based on the PA Science Standards. Each student will conduct labs to collect, analyze, and interpret data. Students will use tools such as FOSS kits, Study Island, iPads for many hands on activities. Assessments are to be derived from the PA State Assessment Anchors and eligible content.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR GRADE 8**

**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS 8 (Two Periods Daily)**— This course includes grammar/usage, vocabulary, public speaking and the writing process. Students will read three works in addition to those covered in their literature texts. Students will develop their problem solving skills through individual and cooperative-learning assignments. Reading assignments and writing exercises will help students learn to be self-reliant, critical thinkers. Students will also be able to discuss and interpret all forms of literature using higher level thinking skills. Finally, students will enhance their writing and speaking skills while reviewing and learning new grammar conventions.

**ADVANCED ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS 8 (Two Periods Daily)**– In this course, the student will be presented with thematic units that integrate literature, writing, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. The student will also continue to utilize the writing process, improve grammar skills, develop public speaking skills, enrich vocabulary, and research. Writing workshops stress personal, narrative, persuasive, descriptive, and informative composition. The students will also read works additional to those covered in their literature text. This course has been designed to challenge students who have demonstrated a need for accelerated coursework in language arts.

*Prerequisites:* 85% or better of the total score of the combined data points

- Class grades
- Teacher Recommendation for 2020–2021 school year
- CDT score
- PVAAS Data

**GRADE 8 MATH (Two Periods Daily)**– Math 8, formerly Pre-Algebra 8, is designed to build on previous material through extensions of mathematical concepts, fluency, practice, projects, applications, and rigor. The instructional time will focus on three critical areas: (1) formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, including modeling an association in bivariate data with a linear equation, and solving linear equations and systems of linear equations; (2) grasping the concept of a function and using functions to describe quantitative relationships; (3) analyzing two- and three-dimensional space and figures using distance, angle, similarity, and congruence, and understanding and applying the Pythagorean Theorem.

### **Grade 8 Modules**

Module 1: The Number System and Properties of Exponents

Module 2: Congruence  
Module 3: Similarity  
Module 4: Linear Equations  
Module 5: Functions from Geometry  
Module 6: Linear Functions  
Module 7: Irrational Numbers using Geometry

Emphasis will be on the following Standards of Mathematical Practice: making sense of problems, reasoning abstractly, constructing and justifying arguments, critique, modeling to represent and solve problems, using appropriate tools to investigate, and attending to precision. Other areas of development are collaboration, critical thinking, and communication of ideas.

**GRADE 8 ALGEBRA (Two Periods Daily)**- This fast-paced course is designed for students who demonstrate a strong mathematical aptitude. Similar to Math 8, students in Algebra 8 will complete all of the PA Core Modules for Grade 8. Additionally, students will complete the PA Core Modules for Algebra I. Students will be required to take both the Grade 8 Math PSSA and the Algebra Keystone Exam.

#### **Algebra Modules**

Module 1: Relationships Between Quantities and Reasoning with Equations  
Module 2: Linear and Exponential Relationships  
Module 3: Descriptive Statistics  
Module 4: Equations and Expressions  
Module 5: Quadratic Functions and Modeling

Prerequisites: 85% or better of the total score of the combined data points

- Class grades, including Advanced Math 7
- Teacher Recommendation for 2020–2021 school year
- CDT score
- PVAAS Data

**U.S. HISTORY 8** – Students will study the cultural diversity and history of the people and events that have contributed to the foundation of the United States. Students will investigate Colonial America, the reasons for separation from Britain, the Revolutionary War, and the origins of the United States as a nation.

**INTEGRATED SCIENCE 8**- This course continues the students' exploration of the four main branches of science: Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Physical Science. Students will participate in class work and hands-on activities based on the PA Science Standards. Each student will conduct labs to collect, analyze, and interpret data. Students will use tools such as FOSS kits, Study Island, iPads for many hands on activities. Assessments are to be derived from the PA State Assessment Anchors and eligible content.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION  
SERVICES**

Students that meet eligibility criteria and are in need of specially designed instruction may receive academic or emotional support from the Steel Valley special education staff. Related services are also provided, including speech and language, occupational and physical therapy, vision services and hearing services. Transition planning is provided for identified students at age 14. Consistent with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (43 P.S. SS 951-963), no student shall be denied access to a free and full public education on account of race, religion, sex, national origin, or handicap.

**DISCLAIMER**

Most courses listed in the handbook will meet once per day, five days per week unless specifically noted otherwise. However, the school district reserves the right to reduce or extend the number of periods per week for some courses, but only as it is consistent with the curriculum regulations established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The material contained in this handbook has been prepared to inform parents and students of the offerings at Steel Valley Middle School. Parents are urged to consult with the principal and/or the counselor concerning any point that is not made clear.

**BOARD OF SCHOOL  
DIRECTORS**

JAMES E. BULGER - *PRESIDENT*  
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**SECONDARY CAMPUS  
PRINCIPAL**

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**SECONDARY ASSOCIATE  
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Dr. AARON JOHNSON: (412) 464-3600 X3505

**GUIDANCE**

SUSAN LARGE: (412) 464-3600 X3521

**DEAN OF STUDENTS**

CLAY KARADUS: (412) 464-3600 X3504

**GRADES**

Report cards are issued every nine weeks. The dates are posted on the district calendar. A progress report will also be sent at the midpoint of each nine weeks. Students and parents can check class progress online using Sapphire. Sapphire activation codes can be obtained from building administration.

**DETERMINING QPA**

Each grading period, a student's Quality Point Average (QPA) is computed by dividing the total number of quality points by the total credit hours for the courses taken. The number of quality points in any single course is the product of the credit hours and the numerical equivalent of the letter grade where A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1 & E=0.

\* Electives are divided into 4 nine-week courses. Each course is 0.25 credits. The total credit for the year is 1.0. To calculate multiply numerical equivalent by .25.

**HONOR ROLL**

An honor roll is compiled at the end of each nine-week period. MS honor roll may differ from other schools in the district due to double class periods. End of the year honor status is based on the lowest honor received during the first 3 nine weeks. Students may qualify for Honor Roll as follows:

**There must be no grades of D, E, or I (incomplete)**

Honor Roll status is determined by the QPA for that 9 weeks:

Honor Roll            3.25 - 3.69

High Honor Roll    3.70 - 3.99

Highest Honors with Distinction 4.00 or higher