

High Desert School – Course Descriptions

Core Content Areas

English 7 – This course begins an in-depth, curriculum in grammar systematically taught to enhance students' ability to speak and write using English conventions. In reading, fluency and stamina are emphasized by setting individual reading goals for students to complete independently. Using an online program, growth in reading levels is evaluated monthly, and progress toward Quarterly reading goals is monitored. In-class reading and writing instruction focuses on understanding and responding to non-fiction and fiction reading selections. In accordance with Common Core goals and standards, students receive instruction in how to seek increasingly deep understanding of what they read and improve clarity and completeness in how they respond in writing. Students are expected to apply the grammar concepts being taught as they learn to produce progressively more sophisticated paragraph responses.

English 7 Enriched – This course begins an in-depth, curriculum in grammar systematically taught to enhance students' ability to speak and write using English conventions with negligible errors. In reading, ever-increasing fluency and stamina are emphasized by setting individual reading goals for students to complete independently. Enriched students are required to spend significantly more time reading and complete more pages each week than students in English 7. As a result, Enriched students must read at or above grade level to qualify for admission to the class. Using an online program, growth in reading levels is evaluated monthly, and progress toward Quarterly reading goals is monitored. In-class reading and writing instruction focuses on understanding and responding to non-fiction and fiction reading selections. In accordance with Common Core goals and standards, students receive instruction in how to seek increasingly deeper understanding of what they read and improve the clarity and completeness with which they respond in writing. Enriched students are stretched to respond to some higher level questions that require greater depth of thought than those in English 7. Students are expected to apply the grammar concepts being taught as they learn to produce progressively more sophisticated paragraph responses.

English 8 – This course continues with the in-depth curriculum in grammar systematically taught to enhance students' ability to speak and write using English conventions. In reading, fluency and stamina are emphasized by setting individual reading goals for students to complete independently. Using an online program, growth in reading levels is evaluated monthly, and progress toward Quarterly reading goals is monitored. In-class reading and writing instruction focuses on understanding and responding to non-fiction and fiction reading selections. In accordance with Common Core goals and standards, students receive instruction in how to seek increasingly deep understanding of what they read and improve clarity and completeness in how they respond in writing. Students are expected to apply the grammar concepts being taught as they learn to produce progressively more sophisticated paragraph responses.

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class reading and writing instruction focuses on understanding and responding to non-fiction and fiction reading selections. In accordance with Common Core goals and standards, students receive instruction in how to seek increasingly deeper understanding of what they read and improve the clarity and completeness with which they respond in writing. Enriched students are stretched to respond to some higher level questions that require greater depth of thought than those in English 8. Students are expected to apply the grammar concepts being taught as they learn to produce progressively more sophisticated paragraph responses.

Math 7 – The focus of this course is to continue to build the foundation necessary for success in the study of algebra. The instruction will be rigorous and concentrate on developing particular skills as defined by the Common Learning Standards. The quality of work will allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts and become fluent in the application, as well as make connections between the theoretical processes and real-world applications. Students will concentrate on the following domains: integers and rational numbers, expressions, equations and inequalities, ratios and proportional relationships, percent and proportional relationships, geometry, and statistics and probability.

Accelerated Math 7 – This course differs from the standard Math 7 and Math 8 courses in that it contains content from both courses. This course is intended for the student who is able to move through the mathematics quickly and still master the full range of mathematical practices, content and skills. Instructional time in the Accelerated Math 7 course focuses on the following grade 7 critical areas: (1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships, including percentages; (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. In addition, the following critical areas from Grade 8 will be included: (1) formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations; (2) analyzing two- and three-dimensional space and figures using distance, angle, similarity, and congruence. The instruction will be rigorous and concentrate on developing various skills. Students will be required to demonstrate fluency in application and conceptual understanding. Therefore, entrance in the course requires mastery of Math 6 and above grade level performance on online assessments. A student who is successful in this course will be prepared to take Algebra 1 in 8th grade.

Math 8 – Math 8 is a course designed as a bridge to Algebra and Geometry. It provides students with an introduction to the concepts of algebra and geometry, and at the same time solidifies their grasp of arithmetic concepts and procedures. This course prepares students for the year-long Algebra 1 course in high school (grade 9). The focus of this course is building the foundation necessary for success in the study of algebra. The instruction will concentrate on the following common core domains: the number system (8.NS), expressions and equations (8.EE), functions (8.F), geometry principles as applied in Algebra (8.G), and an introduction to bi-variate statistics (8.SP). A student who is successful with this program should be ready to take Algebra I as a ninth grader.

Algebra 1 – Algebra I is a one year course designed to take the student from the basic abstract thought processes of Accelerated Math 7 to the introductory level areas of Algebra II. The eighth grade Algebra 1 course is a continuation of the seventh grade-accelerated course. As a result, the prerequisite for this course is successful completion of Acc. Math 7. In addition, students must demonstrate above grade level proficiency on standardized testing measure for entrance into the course. This second year course

focuses on more advanced topics from the Algebra 1 domains. The instruction will be rigorous and concentrate on developing a particular skill and text. The following topics will be covered: real numbers, linear equations with one and two variables, quadratic equations, and systems of equations, functions, coordinate geometry, and bi-variate data analysis. Successful completion of this course will allow students to enroll in Geometry in the 9th grade.

Elective Courses

ASB/Yearbook – In this course, the primary responsibilities of the Officers include communicating with the Student Body and representing Student Body, as well as the planning and production of all-school activities. In the process, we seek to promote citizenship, scholarship, leadership, and human relations. While organizing and promoting various events is the main focus of the class, students will be expected to complete some specific academic assignments as well. Our goal is engagement. We want to offer enough different events that every student will have found something that appeals to him or her personally. The yearbook portion of the course has been designed to provide students with journalism skills and the ability to apply those skills to the actual production of the yearbook. Units of study include teamwork, responsibility, brainstorming, content, coverage, concept, reporting, writing, headlines, captions, editing, photography, typography, design, graphics, finances, yearbook campaigns, advertising and distribution. Actual work results in the current volume of the school's yearbook. The publication strives to maintain a tradition of excellence in which the school and the community can take pride. *This course requires teacher approval.*

Game Design and Digital Design – In this course, students will learn to code and design two games using Flash and ActionScript following a real-world design and iterative engineering process. Students will learn foundational concepts of game design, game mechanics and coding. They will learn to move an original idea from concept to research, to writing a design document, prototyping, programming and digital publishing. In addition, students will practice fundamental digital literacy skills and learn how to participate in a blended-learning CS class.

Google Apps and Coding – This Google Apps course will empower students to work with the different Apps included in the Google Apps suite for students. This course includes how to effectively set up and use Gmail, Google Calendar and Google Docs. Students will learn to create, upload and access documents. They will use Google Spreadsheet to create charts and display data. Students will be able to insert multi-media into documents and presentation and create vivid, collaborative presentations. Students will enhance their typing skills to increase their typing speed and proficiency. In the area of coding, student will learn to build programs using HTML coding language, including the creation of a digital portfolio website.

Environmental Science – In this class we will explore the principals of desert ecology, California plant gardening, ornithology (the study of birds) and meteorology. In desert ecology, we will spend time in the desert ecosystem learning about the plants and animals and their interactions with each other and the abiotic (non-living) parts of the ecosystem. We will also spend time maintaining and upgrading the existing garden as well as learning about our native California vegetation. For ornithology, we will spend time identifying and observing local birds. We are also participating in the Cornell University re-establishment program for blue birds. We will additionally be studying meteorology.

Journalism/Creative Writing – Journalism/Creative Writing is geared to the highly motivated student who desires a firm background in journalistic technique and writing for publication. The Journalism

portion of this course will cover the essential ingredients of newspaper writing including: news stories, features, editorials, and headlines. The course will also stress the techniques of observation, interviewing, reporting, and ethics in the media. In addition, proofreading, editing, and a newspaper layout will be covered. The Creative Writing portion of this course will expose students to a variety of writing genres and require them to understand, analyze, imitate and then produce pieces of writing, which conform to these genres. Students will experience the benefits of creative expression through crafting and revising their own short stories, poems, and non-fiction essays. The creative writing process will be emphasized, as will be teacher, peer and self-critique in a non-judgmental environment. Students will write, revise, critique, and publish their own creative works, and articles while learning to use graphic design software to produce a school newsletter.

Reading/Math Lab – The Reading Lab is designed to advance students’ appreciation of and literacy in reading to support the school’s Strategic Research Based Interventions Program. The course aims to provide students with strategies and skills that proficient, critical, and close readers bring to any text, of which may include but are not limited to decoding multisyllabic words, reading fluently, summarizing main ideas, asking questions of texts and fellow classmates, engaging in discussion, developing individual vocabulary, and making connections. Students will read and discuss literary and non-fiction texts from multiple genres, which will be both teacher- and student-selected and will be addressed independently, in small groups, and as a whole class. Writing in a reading class may include personal response journaling, recording and tracing information and details for discussion and analysis, reflecting upon the reading process or use of a strategy or skill, and exploring key concepts, ideas, or inquiries discovered in the context of reading. The Math Lab portion of the course is to reinforce concepts and skills necessary to be successful at Math. The curriculum spans a wide range of topics; but special emphasis is given to decimal, fraction, algebra, integer and percent operations. Since this is a second Math class, in addition to a student's "regular" Math class, topics are timed in a way where they are covered before, or after, students practice them in the regular Math classes to help them master the skills.

Robotics and Forensics – In this class, students will be exposed to technology and engineering and be engaged through real-world engineering challenges. Students will be given tools to develop problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, and creativity skills. This will be a project based learning environment using Lego Robotics. In forensics, students will take on the role of crime-scene investigators to solve a mystery that has occurred at school. They will be using math, science, and language arts into the study of forensic science and associated legal careers such as district attorney, law enforcement, pathology, forensic science, and medical examination. Students will learn through real world examples and apply their knowledge to in class projects.

Theater Arts – In this class, students use various creative drama techniques to build ensemble, stimulate imagination, movement, and role-play with an emphasis on concentration and stage presence. Students will be taught to direct their focus, intent, and motivation to create and sustain a character. Students will address plot, setting, and character in monologues. Students will focus on realistic acting, commanding audience attention, and developing a stage presence. Students will learn and use drama and theatre vocabulary in class discussions and the activities will address the promotion and reinforcement of students' literacy skills. Students will exhibit and reinforce their skills through individual and group presentations, performances, and script and journal writing. *This is a semester-long course that rotates with Visual Arts.*

Visual Arts – Art class is a place to learn, explore, and create, to build knowledge and confidence for future use in life. In class the students will: create drawings with the understanding of realistic rendering, create paintings that explore personal meaning and artistic styles, continue to analyze, understand and implement the elements and principles of design into their finished art projects. Various projects will focus upon the importance of art in our everyday life, how the visual arts enhance and influence career opportunities, and the importance of art in other cultures and Historical periods. This is a beginning art class in which students will learn about line, shape, value, perspective, design, and color. This class focuses on learning drawing skills, and various drawing media; including pencil, pen, charcoal, and paint. A positive creative environment will be maintained with respect for everyone's creative efforts. *This is a semester-long course that rotates with Theater Arts*

Video Production – This hands-on course addresses the theory and practice of film/video production. Students will be expected to understand and demonstrate: camera operation, audio control, basic directing, lighting, and editing. Students will also be expected to learn the terminology of video production/post-production and use this terminology competently. This introductory course will teach students the basics of photography, camera functions, video editing, media analysis, and filmmaking. Students will work in groups to write, shoot, and edit their own projects. Sample student projects during the year include PSA's, commercials, short films, music video, and a 10 page screenplay in proper format. Selected films are screened during class throughout the year to enhance Socratic seminars every six weeks. Students will work with the following software on Mac computers: Final Cut Pro 7, Adobe Photoshop, iMovie, and Garage Band. *This course requires teacher approval.*