



Syllabus 2016 - 2017  
Eighth Grade



The Learning Castle  
&  
La Cañada Preparatory  
4490 Cornishon Avenue  
La Canada, Flintridge, CA 91011

## LANGUAGE ARTS for Eighth Grade

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to guide eighth-grade students to proficient or advanced levels of mastery of the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. Throughout the year, we will be exploring new and more advanced concepts in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, speaking and listening, writing, and various literary genres encompassing non-fiction and fiction works from classic and modern literature as well as various current and content-related articles. I anticipate that this rigorous course will not only be rewarding but will prepare you well for your academic future and the upcoming challenges of high school English.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Meet and exceed the Common Core English Language Arts Standards for the eighth grade
2. Investigate the relationship between author and reader, thereby determining how authors use different literary elements in order to influence the reader
3. Accurately apply standard English usage, syntax, and mechanics in writing and speaking
4. Acquire new vocabulary as well as familiarity with classical word roots
5. Plan, draft, revise, and complete formal academic essays in expository and persuasive genres

## COURSE OUTLINE

### I. Language Conventions

Platinum Classes will follow Holt's *Elements of Language* curriculum with lessons, practice exercises, and unit tests. Students will continue their studies in grammar, usage, and mechanics with a curriculum that both reinforces basics and introduces new concepts. Each student will progress through this curriculum at his or her own pace.

#### A. Classwork

All work for the language conventions curriculum will be completed in class. Each student will have a checklist for recording assignments and monitoring progress. Students earn credit by completing chapters, just as they do in their math classes.

#### B. Assessments

Once a student has completed all assignments for a chapter, he or she will take the chapter test in class. With a score of 80% or higher, the student may then progress to the next chapter.

### II. Vocabulary

Students will be assigned vocabulary curriculum from Sadlier-Oxford's *Vocabulary Workshop*. Each vocabulary unit will span two weeks (six-day rotations).

#### A. Homework

For each new unit, students must complete practice worksheets for homework. Students are also assigned a set of synonyms, antonyms, and other relevant words which they must look up and define.

#### B. Classwork

During class, students will read aloud and discuss a passage with their vocabulary words. Class time will also be spent correcting their homework worksheets and sharing their supplemental definitions with other group members.

### C. Assessment

Each vocabulary unit will have one test. The test will cover the spellings and definitions along with synonyms, antonyms, and sentence completions.

## III. Literature

Platinum's literary studies will encompass both fiction and nonfiction across a variety of genres. Each unit of study will examine specific literary elements and analyze their influence on one another and effects on the reader.

### A. Classwork

Each chapter will be read aloud by the instructor, who will also define unfamiliar words and lead discussions on relevant literary concepts. Students will be required to read along, highlight new vocabulary, and thoroughly annotate their books based on the ideas discussed. Students will then break up into smaller groups to read the chapter aloud themselves. After the second reading, students will further analyze the work through individual and group activities. Their contributions to discussions and the work they produce will be graded using the Literary Analysis Rubric.

### B. Homework

Each week, students will be assigned a portion of the text to analyze. Assignments will vary in content but will always require that students quote and cite parts of the text and then write at least one paragraph of analysis for each quote. All literature homework assignments will be graded using the Literary Analysis Rubric.

### C. Assessment

A final exam will be administered at the end of each literary unit and will test students' understandings of the concepts covered in that unit. Students will also complete an essay and/or multimedia project that correlates to each unit.

### D. Independent Practice

All students are required to demonstrate regular progress in their independent reading by earning points in the Accelerated Reader program. Each term, their points earned will be divided by their points goal, and this percentage will count toward their final English grade.

#### IV. Writing

Students will investigate and practice the various genres of academic writing in order to prepare for high school and college writing requirements. Writing assignments will correlate to the literature curriculum, and essays may serve as summative assessments for literature units.

##### A. Classwork

Through lecture, note-taking, and guided practice, students will study specific strategies for effective academic composition. While working on term papers, students will have time in class to plan and draft their essays with the instructor's guidance. Students will also complete timed "quickwrites" in class. These spontaneous compositions, written in their composition books, will not be graded. Instead, they will serve as an informal measure of each student's progress in writing and will afford students crucial practice in timed writing.

##### B. Homework

Portions of the prewriting and drafting for term papers will be assigned as homework.

##### C. Assessment

Final drafts of essays will serve as summative assessments. All final drafts must be typed and completed at home.

## GRADING

### Percentage Breakdown

Literature	30%
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Classwork (discussions & activities)	10%
Homework	5%
Assessments	15%
Vocabulary	30%
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Classwork	5%
Homework	10%
Assessments	15%
Language Conventions	25%
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Classwork	15%
Assessments	10%
Writing	15%
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Classwork	10%
Homework	5%



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## WRITING for Eighth Grade

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive essay-writing and poetry with an emphasis on vocabulary building and writing-test preparation.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Among our most basic objectives at La Cañada Preparatory is to emphasize literacy through exposure to various literary genres, but it is also our intention to help students mine their imaginations by expressing ideas in written form. One of the most exciting revelations students can have is to discover that they have something important to say and that their thoughts and feelings can be written down and appreciated by others.

It is our sincere hope that students, even those who find the idea of “writing” repellent, will be buoyed by their progress, and by the vistas that open up before them as a result of their efforts.

### COURSE OUTLINE

- I. Lecture and Vocabulary Notebook
  - A. Students are required to take notes during classroom lectures and keep them up to date and orderly.
  - B. If a student misses a lecture, notes must be obtained from another student.
  - C. Students are also required to build a personal vocabulary list.

1. The parameters of this list are individualized and will be explained to the students.
  2. This list is in addition to other vocabulary-related work done in either this class or in Language Arts.
  3. Notebook completeness and timely presentation represent roughly 10% of a student's final grade.
- D. Individualized vocabulary tests are given alternating weeks and comprise roughly 10% of a student's term grade.
1. In the absence of a valid excuse, students who miss a vocabulary test, and do not make it up within a two-week period, will receive a "zero" for that particular test.
  2. A final vocabulary test will be administered to each student at the end of each term to assess his or her mastery of the words collected throughout that period.
  3. Students are required to bring their lecture and vocabulary notebook to every class.
  4. Those students who do not will have a percentage deducted from the notebook grade.

## II. Composition Tests

- A. Such tests will be administered at the middle and at the end of each term and will comprise roughly 40% of a student's term grade.
- B. These tests will be timed and will reflect the skills practiced in homework and other writing exercises.
- C. Additional tests may be administered in anticipation of ISEE or other standardized tests.

## III. Writing Assignments (Narrative, Expository, Persuasive, Descriptive, and Poetry)

- A. Writing assignments are given semiweekly, time being allotted on "off weeks" for rewriting, teacher consultation and other activities.
- B. It is critical that every assignment be completed in a timely manner, and we ask each student to concentrate on doing a thorough job. Students who



fall too far behind will find it difficult to keep pace with other course demands.

- C. Students are also given worksheets and other exercises to help strengthen areas in which they need help or lack confidence.
- D. Of utmost importance is that the fundamentals of language are reinforced as they are taught in Language Arts and that writing assignments are working in tandem with instruction in Language Arts.
- E. These assignments contribute roughly 40% to a student's term grade.

#### IV. Attendance, Citizenship, and Work Ethics

- A. Students are expected to be punctual and cooperative.
- B. Students who are not vigilant about fulfilling their daily responsibilities put their progress and grades at risk.

### GRADING

Final grades are based on a standard scale: 100% - 90% = "A" range; 89% - 80% = "B" range; 79% - 70% = "C" range; 69% - 60% = "N" range; 59% and below = "U"

Homework, Notebook, and Other Assignments	50%
Composition and Vocabulary Tests	50%
Total	100%



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## MATHEMATICS for Eighth Grade

**TEXT(S) PROGRESSION:** Pre-Algebra  
McDougal Littell

Algebra 1 Concepts and Skills  
McDougal Littell

Algebra Structure and Method  
McDougal Littell

Geometry Concepts and Skills  
McDougal Littell

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

**Eighth-Grade** mathematics will review the four basic arithmetic operations with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and positive and negative integers. Students should understand the relationship between fractions, decimals, and percents. They will learn the properties of exponents, measurement conversion, and how to compute surface area and volume of basic three-dimensional objects. With some students, algebra will be covered in-depth, including multiplication of variables, detailed work with equations and graphing, translating word problems algebraically, quadratic equations and functions, radicals, polynomials and factoring, and rational expressions. The two major math benchmarks of relevance are testing for the ISEE and/or HSPT in early winter and placement exams for freshman-year math in early spring.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Providing the students an opportunity to work in an environment that challenges yet promotes advancements in organization, critical thinking, and analysis
2. Taking responsibility for keeping on task and learning self-direction.
3. Staying motivated and working at a level that is competitive and necessary for high school

## COURSE OUTLINE

- I. Lecture and classwork
  - A. Every student is required to receive a lecture on all sections of the current math book they are using.
  - B. Once the student understands and can verbally repeat key points from the lecture, then he/she is allowed to define key terms and work on the *Guided Practice* section.
  - C. If additional reinforcement is required, supplements can and will be assigned.
- II. Homework
  - A. After the *Guided Practice* is completed and corrected, the student will be responsible for finishing the problems from his/her assignment list. Some sections are split into two separate assignments which can be completed over two homework days.
  - B. On days 2, 4 and 6, students must complete their assigned homework and obtain a parent signature. (Failure to complete homework or signature will result in a deduction of points and homework room during lunch.)
- III. Tests
  - A. Once the student has finished all requirements plus review sections from their current chapters and can show a thorough understanding of the lessons, he/she will then take a chapter test.
  - B. If the student does not pass the chapter test, he/she will be allowed to

retake another version of the test upon additional review and corrections to their first test. The test scores will be averaged, but the highest allotted average can be no higher than 80%.

- C. In order for a student to progress to the next chapter, the average score of the original test and the retake must be a passing mark.

#### IV. Exams

- A. At the end of every term, the students will be required to take an exam.
- B. Exams are given cumulatively on chapters that the students have passed over that term.

#### V. Class Progress

- A. The class-progress grade is designated to show how close students have come to a preset term goal. Every term, a new chapter goal is set, which allows the student to earn 100 points if he/she has passed the predetermined number of chapters.
- B. The 100-point goal will depreciate if the trimester target is not reached. For example, if by the end of a term, a student is two chapters short of the target, then the student will receive 80 points.

### **GRADING POLICY:**

#### Percentage Breakdown

- 40% Exams
- 30% Tests
- 15% Homework
- 15% Class progress



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## UNITED STATES HISTORY for Eighth Grade

**TEXT(S):** Discovering Our Past: History of the United States  
Glencoe McGraw Hill  
*Rented from school.*  
Merriam-Webster's Notebook World Atlas, Merriam-Webster

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of this class is to enable students to understand the development of the United States by examining connections to the past in order to prepare for the future as participating members of a democratic society. Students will examine political, economic, technological, and social developments of the United States from the exploration period through World War I. This includes the impact of expansion on the country's development; political, social, and economic conflicts; influence of diverse groups on cultural development of the U.S.; and key concepts of the U.S. Constitution and other historical documents.

One day, our eighth graders will run this country, so they need to start learning how the whole thing came together. The knowledge and skills acquired in this class will help prepare students to be a working part of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century United States of America

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, each student should:

1. Develop an understanding of history, and the relationship of this history to our world today
2. Develop an understanding and appreciation of how our government works

3. Learn and improve skills in time management and organization, and good work and study habits
4. Improve skills in critical thinking and writing
5. Learn to formulate own opinions based on facts and other information

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

- I. Review of history leading up to the discovery and colonization of America
- II. Colonies in the Americas (English Colonies, Life in the English Colonies, French and Indian War)
- III. The American Revolution (Conflicts in the Colonies, Declaration of Independence)
- IV. Forming a New Government, Citizenship and the Constitution
- V. Westward Expansion (Louisiana Purchase, New Movement Into the West, Relocation of the Native Americans, War)
- VI. The Nation Breaks Apart (Slavery–A Divided Nation, the Civil War)
- VII. Reconstruction and the birth of the Civil Rights Movement
- VIII. Industrialization, Rise of Labor Unions, Immigration, WWI

## **SCHEDULE**

*(The following schedule is meant to serve as a rough outline of the school year. It is not meant to be definite.)*

1. First nine weeks
  - a. Review of American Beginnings and Empires
  - b. Colonies in America
  - c. Conflict in the Colonies
2. Second nine weeks
  - a. The American Revolution
  - b. Forming Our Government
  - c. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights
3. Third nine weeks
  - a. State and Local Government
  - b. Starting a New Nation
  - c. Expansion and Nationalism
  - d. Industry and Agriculture

4. Fourth nine weeks
  - a. Social Movements
  - b. Westward Expansion
  - c. The Civil War
  - d. Reconstruction

## **GRADING SYSTEM**

It is important to know that the grade received for the class will be determined by:

1. Classwork and Homework 50%
2. Tests, Quizzes and Projects 50%

## **PERCENTAGE-GRADING SYSTEM**

97-100%	A+
93-96%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67-69%	N+
63-66%	N
60-62%	N-
59% and below	U



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## SCIENCE CLASS for Eighth Grade

**TEXT:**                    Focus On Physical Science  
Glencoe/McGraw-Hill:  
ISBN #: 0-07-879440-4

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This three-term course explores the world of Earth science and reviews previously learned themes in detail. Concepts covered will vary from the familiar and concrete to the less familiar and abstract within each unit. Students will learn scientific facts and laws as well as how they contribute to various fields of study including physical and life sciences.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In achieving the goals of this course, a student will:

1. Develop an understanding of, and ability to apply, five basic study skills: time-management, note-taking, reading, test-taking, and research
2. Gain an awareness of the need to understand scientific facts, theories, and ideas and how they relate to everyday life
3. Participate in lab experiments and activities throughout the year
4. Develop critical thinking skills through presentation of concepts



## COURSE OUTLINE

### Structure of Matter

- I. Each of the more than 100 elements of matter has distinct properties and a distinct atomic structure. All forms of matter are composed of one or more of the elements. As a basis for understanding this concept:
  - A. Students know the structure of the atom and know it is composed of protons, neutrons, and electrons
  - B. Students know that compounds are formed by combining two or more different elements and that compounds have properties that are different from their constituent element
  - C. Students know atoms and molecules form solids by building up repeating patterns, such as the crystal structure of NaCl or long-chain polymers
  - D. Students know the states of matter (solid, liquid, gas) depend on molecular motion
  - E. Students know that in solids the atoms are closely locked in position and can only vibrate; in liquids the atoms and molecules are more loosely connected and can collide with and move past one another; and in gases the atoms and molecules are free to move independently, colliding frequently
  - F. Students know how to use the periodic table to identify elements in simple compounds

### Reactions

- II. Chemical reactions are processes in which atoms are rearranged into different combinations of molecules. As a basis for understanding this concept:
  - A. Students know reactant atoms and molecules interact to form products with different chemical properties.
  - B. Students know the idea of atoms explains the conservation of matter: In chemical reactions the number of atoms stays the same no matter how they are arranged, so their total mass stays the same.
  - C. Students know chemical reactions usually liberate heat or absorb heat.
  - D. Students know physical processes include freezing and boiling, in which a

material changes form with no chemical reaction.

- E. Students know how to determine whether a solution is acidic, basic, or neutral.

### **Periodic Table**

III. The organization of the periodic table is based on the properties of the elements and reflects the structure of atoms. As a basis for understanding this concept:

- A. Students know how to identify regions corresponding to metals, nonmetals, and inert gases.
- B. Students know each element has a specific number of protons in the nucleus (the atomic number) and each isotope of the element has a different but specific number of neutrons in the nucleus.
- C. Students know substances can be classified by their properties, including their melting temperature, density, hardness, and thermal and electrical conductivity.

### **Chemistry of Living Systems**

IV. Principles of chemistry underlie the functioning of biological systems. As a basis for understanding this concept:

- A. Students know that carbon, because of its ability to combine in many ways with itself and other elements, has a central role in the chemistry of living organisms.
- B. Students know that living organisms are made of molecules consisting largely of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, and sulfur.
- C. Students know that living organisms have many different kinds of molecules, including small ones, such as water and salt, and very large ones, such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, and DNA

### **Earth in the Solar System**

V. The structure and composition of the universe can be learned from studying stars and galaxies and their evolution. As a basis for understanding this concept:

- A. Students know galaxies are clusters of billions of stars and may have different shapes

- B. Students know that the Sun is one of many stars in the Milky Way galaxy and that stars may differ in size, temperature, and color
- C. Students know how to use astronomical units and light years as measures of distances between the Sun, stars, and Earth
- D. Students know that stars are the source of light for all bright objects in outer space and that the Moon and planets shine by reflected sunlight, not by their own light
- E. Students know the appearance, general composition, relative position and size, and motion of objects in the solar system, including planets, planetary satellites, comets, and asteroids

### **Forces**

- VI. Unbalanced forces cause changes in velocity. As a basis for understanding this concept:
  - A. Students know a force has both direction and magnitude
  - B. Students know when an object is subject to two or more forces at once, the result is the cumulative effect of all the forces
  - C. Students know when the forces on an object are balanced, the motion of the object does not change
  - D. Students know how to identify separately the two or more forces that are acting on a single static object, including gravity, elastic forces due to tension or compression in matter, and friction
  - E. Students know that when the forces on an object are unbalanced, the object will change its velocity (that is, it will speed up, slow down, or change direction)
  - F. Students know the greater the mass of an object, the more force is needed to achieve the same rate of change in motion
  - G. Students know the role of gravity in forming and maintaining the shapes of planets, stars, and the solar system

### **Density and Buoyancy**

- VII. All objects experience a buoyant force when immersed in a fluid. As a basis for understanding this concept:

- A. Students know density is mass per unit volume
- B. Students know how to calculate the density of substances (regular and irregular solids and liquids) from measurements of mass and volume
- C. Students know the buoyant force on an object in a fluid is an upward force equal to the weight of the fluid the object has displaced.
- D. Students know how to predict whether an object will float or sink

### **Investigation and Experimentation**

- VII. Scientific progress is made by asking meaningful questions and conducting careful investigations. As a basis for understanding this concept and addressing the content in the other three strands, students should develop their own questions and perform investigations. Students will:
  - A. Plan and conduct a scientific investigation to test a hypothesis
  - B. Evaluate the accuracy and reproducibility of data
  - C. Distinguish between variable and controlled parameters in a test
  - D. Recognize the slope of the linear graph as the constant in the relationship  $y=kx$  and apply this principle in interpreting graphs constructed from data.
  - E. Construct appropriate graphs from data and develop quantitative statements about the relationships between variables
  - F. Apply simple mathematic relationships to determine a missing quantity in a mathematic expression, given the two remaining terms (including speed = distance/time, density = mass/volume, force = pressure  $\times$  area, volume = area  $\times$  height)
  - G. Distinguish between linear and nonlinear relationships on a graph of data

## **GRADING POLICY:**

All students will need to gain command of the material presented in class. While tests are used as an evaluation tool, they are not the sole criteria for final grades. A combination of tests, assignments, class and lab participation, and oral presentations will determine final grade calculations.

It is important to know that the grade received for each term will be determined by:

1. homework and other assignments (labs, classwork, and projects) – 50%;
2. test and exams – 50%.