



**WESTMOUNT**

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**CHARTER SCHOOL**

**Grades 6 to 8**

**MIDDLE SCHOOL  
COURSE HANDBOOK  
2010-2011**

# WESTMOUNT CHARTER SCHOOL

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**Charter School Goal:** Each gifted student is provided with opportunities to optimize his or her own unique potential.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

*Westmount Charter School, as a partner in the best learning system in the world, will be recognized as the centre for excellence in gifted education.*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*To meet the learning needs of gifted students and promote their social-emotional development in a congregated setting.*

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# **CORE COURSES**

## **ENGLISH**

### **English Language Arts 6**

This course is closely tied to grade 6 Social Studies. The following skills are focused upon: writing - letters, narratives, newspaper reports and poetry; reading – research skills, comprehension and literature; and oral language – delivering partner, group and whole language presentations, applying conventions such as clarity of speech, eye contact and alike, and use of expression, gesture, and movement to enhance presentations.

### **English Language Arts 7**

This course enhances students' ability to explore thoughts, feelings, and experiences through responding constructively to alternative ideas and opinions. Students analyze plot, sub-plot, and examine the interrelation between character, plot, and setting. Through critical reading, students summarize the main idea in their own words and create biographies and autobiographies. Students work on different strategies to clarify their writing and ideas during class discussions. Group work is integrated and personal reflections are done on a continuous basis.

### **English Language Arts 8**

This course is a continuation from grade 7 and it designed to further develop the student's skills, knowledge and attributes regarding the English language. The course will incorporate the Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory; differentiated instruction; mastery learning and integrated curriculum. Students will use novel studies, plays, poetry, short stories, non-fiction and other writings to help them advance their skills in thinking and presenting, as well as further development of their reading, writing, and presentation abilities. Units of study include: exploration of thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences; comprehension and responding personally and critically; managing ideas & information; enhancing the clarity and artistry of communication; and respect, support and collaboration with others.

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Alberta Education is in the process of implementing a revised social studies program for K–12 in Alberta. The aim of the new social studies program is to promote a sense of belonging and acceptance in students as they engage in active and responsible citizenship. At the heart of Alberta's new social studies program are the concepts of citizenship and identity in the Canadian context. It also includes multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, which contribute to Canada's identity. The new program also has a greater focus on Canadian and Alberta history.

### **Social Studies 6**

Grade 6 students will broaden their understanding of democracy in the Canadian experience and develop an awareness of the active role that engaged citizens can play within the democratic process.

Grade 6 students will examine how participation in the democratic process is a means for governments and citizens to effect change in their communities.

They will explore how democratic principles and ideals are reflected in the structure and functions of their local and provincial governments. Students will examine how ancient Athens and the Iroquois Confederacy have influenced Canada's democratic processes. Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the dynamic relationship between governments and citizens as they engage in the democratic process.

As well, students will develop an understanding and appreciation of the democratic principles exemplified by ancient Athens and the Iroquois Confederacy.

### **Social Studies 7**

Through an examination of events proceeding and following Confederation, Grade 7 students will acquire an understanding of how Canada has evolved into a multicultural, bilingual, pluralistic and diverse society; and they will appreciate how these dimensions of Canada have affected citizenship and identity over time.

Grade 7 students will explore the origins, histories and movement of peoples who forged the foundations of Canadian Confederation. They will examine how the political, demographic, economic and social changes that have occurred since Confederation have influenced ways in which contemporary Canada has evolved.

### **Social Studies 8**

This course will use thematic project and problem based learning activities. The course will incorporate the following: Multiple Intelligence (MI) Theory; Experiential Education; Differentiated Curriculum; Mastery Learning; Integrated Curriculum. Units of study include: Japan - from isolation to adaptation; Origins of Western Worldview - renaissance Europe and Worldviews in conflict - The Spanish and the Aztecs.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Alberta Education is implementing a re-organization of the mathematics curriculum in stages over the next few years. With this re-organization, the number of outcomes for each grade level has been reduced so that each topic can be explored in greater depth. Learning situations are created which allow the student to discover the concepts on their own. Logic and reasoning are encouraged through problem solving situations. With problems, students are required to document and to explain the procedures used to solve the problem.

### **Mathematics 6**

This course builds on the knowledge, skills, and attributes acquired in grade 5. Units of study include: number concepts and operations; patterns and relationships; shape and space; as well as statistics and probability. Students are also introduced to basic algebraic equations and increasingly complex problem solving models in preparation for Math 7.

### **Mathematics 7**

This course builds knowledge, skills and attributes acquired in grade 6. Units of study include: **number theory** - divisibility, relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages, computations using decimals, introduction to integers; **patterns and relations** - beginner algebra, and graphing and interpreting relations; **shape and space** - radius, diameter and circumference of a circle, problem solving situations involving the use of circles, translations, rotations and reflections; and **statistics and probability** - formulating questions, designing experiments, collecting, describing and interpreting data, creating and solving problems dealing with probability.

### **Mathematics 8**

This course continues to develop the fundamental skills gained in earlier years such as problem solving through estimation, reasoning, and visualization. The course emphasizes communication and the use of technology through exploration of number theory, statistics, probability, algebra, and geometry. The grade 8 course sets the stage for entrance into the more complex mathematical ideas introduced in Grade 9 and beyond.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Science 6**

This course will introduce students to a more rigorous application of the scientific method and are encouraged to develop their curiosity about the world around them. The units of study include: trees and forests, air and aerodynamics, flight, sky science, and evidence and investigation. Students will be provided opportunities for further investigation of the world around them and to acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to understand their role as responsible citizens in science.

### **Science 7**

This course is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the core science courses covered in middle school. The units of study include: interactions and ecosystems, heat and temperature, planet earth, structures and forces, and plants for food and fiber. Students will be encouraged to continue to develop a healthy curiosity about the world around them and to further acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes to understand their role as responsible citizens in science.

### **Science 8**

This course is the last of the core science courses covered in middle school. The units of study include: mix and matter of flow, cells and systems, light and optical systems, mechanical systems, and fresh and saltwater systems. Students will be encouraged to further develop a healthy curiosity about the world around them and to acquire the skills, knowledge and attitudes to understand their role as responsible citizens in science.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical Education 6**

This course will have students select, perform and refine more challenging basic skills in a variety of environments and using various equipment, e.g. downhill skiing, hiking. They will learn to demonstrate a creative process to develop dance sequences alone and with others; demonstrate sport specific skills to create competitive and cooperative modified games that involve everyone; and demonstrate activity-specific skills in a variety of individual activities, e.g. track and field/athletics.

### **Physical Education 7**

This course will have students learn to demonstrate locomotor, non-locomotor and manipulative skills, by using elements of body and space awareness, effort and relationships to improve personal performance. Students will demonstrate activity-specific basic skills in a variety of games. They will learn more challenging strategies and tactics that coordinate effort with others, e.g. team/fair play, in order to achieve a common goal. Activities will include dance, games, gymnastics, aquatics and outdoor pursuits.

### **Physical Education 8**

This course will have students select, combine and perform activity-specific skills in a variety of games. They will be able to identify and evaluate specific strategies and tactics that coordinate effort with others, e.g. team/fair play, in order to achieve a common goal. Students will learn to improve their personal performance by using elements of body and space awareness, effort and relationships. Activities will include dance, games, gymnastics, aquatics and outdoor pursuits.

## Grade 7 Programs

At grade 7 Westmount offers our students three focused core programs. Parents and students need to consider the student's learning needs / styles, desired areas of growth, Multiple Intelligence strengths and personal interests when considering these programs. **There are additional course fees for this grade to allow for a greater than typical field trip / excursion component.**

Students need to indicate on the course selection sheet their first, second and third choice.

### **Innovations**

This course has a science and math focus, encompassing real-life problems for students to solve and apply their science/math skills. The program is problem-based and inquiry-based with an infusion of technology skills grade seven students will utilize throughout the year. Students will have opportunities to become involved in the community through various fieldtrips as they help solve these real-life sustainability issues. Throughout the year, students will contribute ideas and by integrating the grade seven science and math units of studies for the entire year, universal sustainability solutions will be created.

Some of the questions we may explore in this program include:

- How can you reduce your environmental footprint to sustain life on Earth?
- How can you sustain life on Mars?
- How can we provide sustainable shelter for individuals who are less fortunate?
- How can buildings be designed to sustain an earthquake?

### **"Footprints"**

This course offers an integrated approach to grade 7 curriculums utilizing a social sciences focus. Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Math are integrated into an active, applied inquiry approach. Students will be engaged in creative opportunities involving service learning and experiential activities. Primary goals of the program are to develop the students' self and social awareness, and expose them to a worldview of issues. Students will be experiencing the world through action – both inside and outside of the school walls.

### **Project Earth**

This course offers an integration of grade 7 curriculums utilizing an environmental sciences focus. Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Science, Physical Education and an Environmental Science option are integrated into active, applied learning. Students are involved in numerous off-campus activities which provide hands-on opportunities and enhance classroom learning. This course involves a **significant** amount of time spent outdoors in **all weather conditions** and **will** include such activities as winter / wilderness camping, mountain biking, and hiking.

## **COMPLEMENTARY COURSES**

Complementary courses are offered dependent on sufficient student requests and teacher expertise - therefore all courses may not be offered in every term.

### **ART**

#### **Art 6**

*Pre-requisite: None*

Students will be introduced to a variety of media and skills focusing on the principles and elements of design. Students will not only study forms and images in creating works of art but will begin to apply meaning through symbolism. Students will have the opportunity to begin developing skills related to critical analysis as a means to study, understanding and appreciation.

#### **Art 7**

*Pre-requisite: Art 6*

Students will build on the foundations introduced in Art 6. Students will explore and add to their knowledge of techniques and styles of art. Students will be introduced to self-directed learning for greater success in Art 8. In this process students will begin creating ideas and projects through individual interpretation of the curriculum. Time management and self-reflection will be a focus in the introduction of this style of learning.

#### **Art 8**

*Pre-requisite: Art 7*

Students continue to develop on the foundations from Art 6 and 7. Students explore self-directed learning as a means to developing professional studio artist skills. Students will create individual works of art related to curriculum expectations while honing skills in time management and self-reflection. Students will further develop skills in critiquing art through positive discussion and analysis.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

#### **Dance (gr 6 & 7)**

*Pre-requisite: none*

This course teaches students to think creatively and how to express thoughts and feelings through movement. Students are exposed to performance opportunities, group work, choreography, rhythm and dance techniques, various dance forms as well as costuming and critiquing skills. Student's level of expertise is addressed through differentiated projects and assessment. Evaluation is based on performance, participation, teaching skills-workshops and project/assignment work.

#### **Drama 6**

This introductory course is an introduction to the drama program. The goal of the program is to develop a sense of self and encouragement to present in front of peers. Students learn about theatre arts through the study of the basic disciplines of Movement, Speech, Improvisation, Theatre Studies and Technical Theatre. Learning objectives are based on outcomes relating to: tableaux, mime, choral speech, reader's theatre, performance analysis, make-up and visual media. Specific skills include characterization, voice projection, scene development, film analysis, and mime make-up application techniques.

## **Drama 7**

Students will review theatre disciplines learned in Drama 6 and build on these with more in-depth focus relating to performance analysis and technical theatre activities. Theatre Arts will be studied through the basic disciplines of Movement, Speech, Improvisation, Theatre Studies and Technical Studies. The goal of this program is to continue building the student's self confidence and performance technique through studies in clowning, movement, script writing, and media analysis.

## **Drama 8**

Students will review theatre disciplines learned in Drama 6 and 7 and build upon these with more in-depth focus relating to mystery genre, playwriting, special effects make-up, and performance and technical theatre. Theatre Arts will be studied through the basic disciplines of Movement, Speech, Improvisation, Theatre Studies and Technical Studies. The goal of this program is to provide a basis for developing and understanding "performance for an audience". Students learn and demonstrate their craft through a combination of student created scripts and performances.

## **SECOND LANGUAGES**

Alberta Education has provided a number of models for the study of a second language, at Westmount we utilize the 3 year and the 9 year model.

Students at Westmount begin their language experience at grade 5 and may choose which language to continue studying through in middle school. Once a student declares a language in grade 6 of 2009/10 they will be required to continue through grade 8 and are encouraged continue following this program, based on the 9 year model, through high school.

Students entering 8 are not *required* to study a language though we encourage it and recommend they continue through high school.

Students who have not started a second language program in grade 7 or 8 will have the opportunity to begin in grade 9, and follow the 3 year model in high school.

## **French 6**

*Pre-requisite: None*

This introductory course is a transition for students from our grade 5 second-language program, OR for students who are being exposed to the language for the 1<sup>st</sup> time or have little to no experience with it. The goal of this program is to provide a basis for speaking and understanding the French language. Students learn and demonstrate their understanding through a combination of teacher-directed lessons and specific learner outcomes. The learning objectives are based on themes such as school, weather, animals and holidays; as well as basic grammar, such as adjectives, pronouns and verbs in the present tense. Specific skills include: gender, the plural of nouns, definite and indefinite articles, verbs in the present tense, irregular verbs in the present tense (avoir, etre, aller, faire), prepositions of place, commonly used sentences, commonly asked questions, adjectives, possessive adjectives and pronoun usage.

## **French 7**

*Pre-requisite: French 6*

Students will review introductory elements learned in French I, and build upon their basic understanding of the language with the aim of developing beginner/intermediate knowledge of French. Students will also develop better listening, speaking and comprehension skills in the French language. Students learn and demonstrate their understanding through a combination of teacher-directed lessons and independent objective-based learning. The learning objectives are based on themes such as community, health and exercise, housing, food and fashion. Specific skills include: review of all previous skills from level I such as verbs in the present tense, questioning, the partitive in the present tense, the immediate future tense, questions using inversion.

## **French 8**

***Pre-requisite: French 7***

Students will review all elements learned in French I and II, and add on to their understanding of the language with the aim of expanding both their written and oral communication. Students learn and demonstrate their understanding of the French language through specific grammatical & oral speaking learning objectives. Similar to level I and II, this class is also taught using a thematic approach. Units of study include: close friends, clubs and associations, holidays and fine arts.

## **Spanish 6**

***Pre-requisite: None***

This introductory course is a transition for students from our grade 5 second-language program, OR for students who are being exposed to the language for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. Students will learn greetings, numbers, animals, colors and some basic grammar (adjectives, articles, pronouns, and the verb "to be" in the present tense). It is taught in a friendly environment with games and fun activities that stimulate basic communication.

## **Spanish 7**

***Pre-requisite: Spanish 6***

This course will offer the opportunity to further develop a student's listening, speaking and comprehension skills in this language. Students will expand their vocabulary (e.g. clothing, food, daily activities) and be introduced to action verbs in the present tense. Level II students should be prepared to work in a fast paced environment but with opportunities to maintain comfortable levels of communication and interaction.

## **Spanish 8**

***Pre-requisite: Spanish 7***

This course is the last in the middle school Spanish program, before moving on to the High School courses. Students will continue to expand on grammatical structures in both oral and written communication. Some of the grammatical elements that students will learn are possessive adjectives, pronouns and nouns, irregular, imperative and present progressive verbs.

## **Various**

### **Science and Technology (grade 6 only)**

***Pre-requisite: None***

This locally developed course will give students the opportunity to carry out an "in-depth" exploration of an area of scientific interest utilizing technology as both a tool for inquiry and presentation. Students will participate in the selection of topics and be guided in developing goals and plans for their learning. These may also lead to participation in a variety of science competitions.

### **World Music I (grade 7 only)**

***Pre-requisite: None***

This locally developed, introductory course exposes students to West African instruments and culture. Students will learn and demonstrate their understanding through research, presentations and demonstrations of rhythms and techniques. Opportunities to perform as a group may be available.

**Computer Studies (grade 7 only)**

*Pre-requisite: None*

This course introduces students to proper computer use, terminology and the Office Suite programs. The specific modules to be offered are: Computer Operations, Keyboarding, Word Processing, Graphic Tools, Database, Spreadsheets, Hypermedia Tools, Information Highway, Electronic Publishing and Programming.

**Yoga (grade 7 & 8 only)**

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the ancient eastern practice of Yoga. The course will focus on the history and philosophy of yoga, the eight limbs of Raja yoga, eastern and western anatomy, physical asana (posture) practice, mindfulness meditation and interpretation of Patanjali's yoga sutras.

**Ethics (grade 8 only)**

Students will arrive at a working definition of the term "ethics" and will be able to demonstrate an awareness that society is characterized by uncertainty, change and ambiguity. They will be able to identify the ethical implications in issues and express personal convictions in productive group discussions. Students will also gain an introductory understanding of messages in the media.

**Environmental/Outdoor Education (grade 8 & 9)**

*Pre-requisite: None*

The curriculum for this course is a combination of instruction in environmental issues, responsible outdoor recreation and positive group dynamics. This course is intended to introduce older middle school students to the urban aspects of all these things. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the environmental impacts, ramifications and responsibilities associated with living in a city in Canada. They will also be introduced to the myriad of available outdoor recreational opportunities available to them. All of this will be framed around building skills in teamwork, communication and peer leadership.

**Lego-Botics (grade 8 & 9)**

*Pre-requisite: None*

In this course students will be introduced to and develop the skills for designing robots using "LEGO" products and the computer programs from the Lego-Mindstorms materials.

**Journalism (grade 8 & 9)**

In this course students will look at the role journalists play a role in informing society. Students will have the opportunity to develop journalistic skills through research and writing. They will also look at the industry of media and the potential for work in the area.

## **BAND**

The Westmount band program provides opportunities from beginner to advanced levels of performance. Student placement in the band program is determined through audition. All band students are required to rent/purchase their instrument and supplies, and purchase their method book and workbook. Students are also required to own the band uniform, appropriate to their band membership (orders are placed in late September). A complete list of materials is distributed to registered students, or upon request.

### **Beginner Band (Level I)**

This course is designed for students who are new to Band. Students are taught the rudimentals and fundamentals of their chosen Band instrument (flute, oboe, clarinet, alto sax, tenor sax, trumpet/cornet, trombone, baritone/euphonium, electric bass and percussion, subject to approval by the Director). By the end of the school year, students are prepared to join Junior Band.

### **Junior Band (Level II)**

*Pre-requisite: Beginner Band or 1 year of experience on instrument*

Junior Band is designed for students with at least 1 year of experience on their instrument, and has previous experience playing in a Concert Band. Instruments introduced at this level include piccolo, bass clarinet, baritone saxophone, tuba and French horn.

### **Intermediate Band (Level III)**

*Pre-requisite: Junior Band or 2 years of experience on instrument*

This course is for students with at least 2 years of experience on their instrument, and have previous experience playing in a Concert Band. Study is more in-depth than in Junior Band and requires strong commitment to a regular practice routine. Double bass is introduced at this level.

### **String Orchestra I**

*Pre-requisite: none*

This is an ensemble performance group for beginners who wish to study violin, viola, cello or double bass. No instrumental or music reading experience is required. The school owns limited numbers of cellos and basses, for use during rehearsals. Violinists and violists are required to bring their own instrument to rehearsals.

### **String Orchestra II**

*Pre-requisite: String Orchestra I (or minimum one year of experience)*

This is an ensemble performance group for experienced violin, viola, cello or double bass players. All students must rent or own their instrument. The school owns limited numbers of cellos and basses, for use during rehearsals. Violinists and violists are required to bring their own instrument to rehearsals.

### **Jazz Band (Extra-curricular)**

Concert Band membership is mandatory for acceptance into one of the Jazz Bands. Rehearsals are after school, once a week (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday). Instrumentation is limited to alto sax, tenor sax, bari sax, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, drums, and guitar.

### **Stage Band (Extra-curricular)**

Concert Band membership is mandatory for acceptance into one of the Stage Bands. Music is similar to the Jazz Bands, but instrumentation is open to any Concert Band instrument. Stage Bands are not performance-based. Rehearsals are after school, once a week (Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday).