Middle School students develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in their chosen language. Our faculty intentionally develop a collaborative, risk-taking classroom culture that focuses on creative and flexible thinking. Our methods include skits, discussions, storytelling, reading, and games, along with videos, songs, art, news stories, podcasts, telenovelas, and authentic literary sources. We use the language outside the classroom through field trips to the Mexican Cultural Institute, French Embassy, Maison Française, and National Gallery of Art, as well as lunch clubs, cooking classes, and service-learning experiences.

6th Grade - Introduction to Spanish-speaking and French-speaking Cultures

In this course, students explore cultural topics in Francophone and Hispanic countries and cultures, including food, holiday celebrations, history and mythology, as well as the Francophone and Hispanic diasporas in the U.S. Activities include cooking lessons, videos, trips to museums and embassies, and student-led presentations. While taught primarily in English, the course does introduce students to basic vocabulary. At the end of the year, students choose which language to pursue in 7th and 8th grades.

6th Grade - Advanced Spanish 6

For students coming to Burke with an extensive Spanish background, this class, conducted completely in Spanish, strengthens students’ reading and writing skills in preparation for Spanish 7/8 with Advanced Topics.

*Spanish 7/8

Spanish 7 students learn to use the present tense, express in-depth likes and dislikes, as well as talk about future plans. Cultural content focuses on the Day of the Dead, the Festa de Gràcia street festival in Barcelona, and Carnival throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The 7th Grade
curriculum culminates with a class-wide project in which students collaborate to create a series of decorations (with recycled materials), inspired by Festa de Gràcia. High-achieving 7th grade students may progress to Spanish 7/8 with Advanced Topics in the 8th grade.

*Spanish 7/8 with Advanced Topics*

With an emphasis on language immersion, this course advances students’ language proficiency and exposure to the cultures of the Spanish speaking world. The instructor for this course employs the Organic World Language (OWL) model, a collaborative, immersive and interactive approach that focuses on community, breaking down the affective filter, and taking risks. Students learn about cultures, geography, and the history of numerous countries where Spanish is spoken, as well as engage in group-work, role-playing, readings, projects, essays, discussions, Socratic Seminars, debates, and games in Spanish.

*French 7/8*

This course introduces students to the French language and covers basic grammatical concepts (masculine and feminine, singular and plural, the notion of agreement, idioms, and conjugation in the present and near-future tenses), while emphasizing speaking, listening, and conversational skills. At the end of the course, students can express themselves in basic French on topics such as school, sports, weekend activities, food, city and country life, weather and clothing, likes and dislikes, and friends and family. In the process, students explore the cultures of French-speaking people around the world.

(*) as these classes combine 7th and 8th graders, the latter receive differentiated instruction that builds on and enhances the skills from 7th grade, with a focus on strengthening their speaking, reading and writing skills.

Preparation for High School

At the end of Middle School in World Languages:

- Most students move on to French 2 or Spanish 2 in high school; students who conclude Spanish 7/8 with Advanced Topics move on to Spanish 3 or above in high school.
- Students have developed the habits and skills necessary to negotiate a second language in an immersive environment.
- Students have demonstrated improvement in their proficiency and their ability to use and interpret the target language for interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational purposes.
- Students have demonstrated improvement in their ability to infer, negotiate meaning, and create with the language.
- Students have gained appreciation for cultures other than their own.