Edmund Burke School | Middle School (Grades 6-8)

English Department

The middle school English program lays the foundation for a lifelong love of reading and writing, as well as success in high school English. We foster depth, self-awareness, exploration, and experimentation in the writing process, and variety, relevance, and excitement in the approach to selecting and enjoying reading. Courses emphasize analysis, discussions, collaborative projects, creative writing, and skill building through challenging and joyful practice.

6th Grade - Core: Literature, History, and Storytelling

6th Grade English centers around the question of what it means to be a community. In the first trimester, students engage in a Ward Project and focus on building a strong 6th Grade community as they answer the question, “Who am I locally?” Second trimester, students look at origin myths and write their own myths, answering the question, “Who am I in the universe?” Third trimester, students read texts dealing with issues of American history and talk about what it means to be citizens, answering the question, “Who am I in the US?”

7th Grade - Language Arts

In 7th Grade English, students analyze the parts that make up characters and stories, then move confidently beyond plot into analyzing themes and literary devices. The year begins with the study of fairy tales, then moves to short stories and novels, some of which are set in the same countries the students explore in their World Geography class. Students build reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills through discussion, independent reading and writing; in addition, students analyze and model the styles of literature they are reading.
8th Grade - American Voices

In 8th Grade English, students view different experiences of what it means to be American, exploring current issues and high-interest topics through the close analysis of literature. They read novels, short stories, poetry, and nonfiction, by writers with unique perspectives on issues ranging from identity to education to human rights – examining how and why people are marginalized in America and considering issues of culture, class, gender, and race. Using perseverance, students build writing skills through revision, editing, and exploring both analytical and creative approaches to texts read and issues discussed.

Special Projects and Trips

- **6th Grade**: trips to Jamestown and Williamsburg, and New York City, designed to augment the humanities program; “Bettering Burke” project proposals to administrators; Year-long Research Project about topics of interest, culminating in 15-minute presentations
- **7th Grade**: Science Fiction Unit analyzing social justice issues; Youth Environmental Summit emphasizing persuasive speech-writing
- **8th Grade**: Refugee Project; Civil Rights Trip to Alabama; Spoken Word Poetry Performances; Documentary about social justice issues

Preparation for High School

_Students conclude Middle School English with:_

- a foundation in grammar, particularly parts of speech and parts of sentences
- the ability to use imagery in their own stories
- an understanding of abstract literary terms such as symbol and theme
- the ability to make arguments based on evidence in the text, and to prove them using specific evidence
- the ability to write analytical theses and clear topic sentences, and construct a full analytical essay
- the ability to participate comfortably and effectively in classroom discussions
- effective strategies for successfully engaging in group work
- developing fluency as readers and writers