



Washington Square Academy

Curriculum 2025-2026

Grade 8

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English

Advanced English (College Level)

Objectives

This course requires students to read college-level texts critically and with an understanding of the ways rhetoric supports author's purpose. Most of the reading will be of nonfiction texts from a wide range of disciplines and time periods. The course also requires students to regularly write essays of synthesis, analysis, and argument, producing multiple drafts of each essay. The knowledge and skills acquired in this course will prepare highly-motivated students to excel on the College Board's AP English Language and Composition* exam in May.

Text & Reference Materials

- *The Bedford Reader*, 15th Ed., X.J. Kennedy; D.M. Kennedy; J. Aaron; E.K. Repetto, Macmillan Learning
- *The Language of Composition: Reading, Writing, Rhetoric*, 3rd Ed., R. Shea, L. Scanlon, & R. by Renee Shea (Author), Lawrence Scanlon (Author), Robin Aufses (Author), Bedford/St. Martin's

Content

Course content will broadly align with the College Board's [AP Language and Composition curriculum](#)*.

*AP is a trademark registered and owned by the College Board. WSA has no affiliation with the College Board.

Honors English

Objectives

Cite strong textual evidence to support textual analysis; identify multiple themes in complex works of literature, especially as those themes interact with each other to create meaning; understand competing or contradictory motivations of complex characters; place literature in cultural contexts, recognizing how a character's point of view and actions signal acceptance or rejection of cultural norms or the intellectual ideas of a period or place; acquire an increasingly comprehensive academic vocabulary;



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demonstrate understanding of the conventions of Standard English; write in a variety of styles and genres, paying close attention to purpose, context, and audience; design and deliver polished presentations for a variety of purposes.

Texts & Reference Materials

Literature:

(Note that selections may vary by academic year.)

Novels & Plays:

- *This Dark Endeavor: The Apprenticeship of Victor Frankenstein*, Kenneth Oppel
- *These Violent Delights*, Chloe Gong
- *Vinegar Girl*, Ane Tyler
- *The Song of Achilles*, Madeline Miller
- *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas
- *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens
- Student choice of text, by vote

Selected Short Stories:

- “The Somebody,” Danny Santiago
- “A & P,” John Updike
- “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- “Sredni Vashtar,” Saki
- “A Family Supper,” Kazuo Ishiguro
- “In the Shadow of War,” Ben Okri
- “Encounter,” Roy Jacobsen
- “Night Women,” Edwidge Danticat

Selected Poems:

- Sonnets, William Shakespeare
- Selections from Billy Collins’ Poetry 180
- Lyrics from popular music (e.g., works by Taylor Swift, Kendrick Lamar, Tupac Shakur)
- Romantic poetry (Wordsworth, Keats, Blake, Coleridge)
- Metaphysical poetry (Donne, Marvell, Cowley)
- “Still I Rise,” Maya Angelou

Selected Works of Non-Fiction:

- *They Called Us Enemy*, George Takei
- Supporting primary source documents, which may include “West Coast Widens Martial Law Call” and “Only 2,971 Enemy Aliens Are Held; Rest of the 1,100,000 Being Watched Here Are Unmolested,” 1942, *The New York Times*



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- Other newspaper articles and essays on a variety of topics, student- and teacher-selected

Language:

- *Wordly Wise* Vocabulary Study, Levels 8-9
- *The Rooted Mind*: Latin and Greek Roots Challenge
- Various teacher-generated materials
- Selections from NoRedInk.com and IXL.com



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Mathematics

Texts & Reference Materials

- [Singapore Intensive Math](#)
- [Art of Problem Solving](#)
- Teacher-generated materials

Math 8 Geometry Honors

- Quadrilaterals
- Transformations
- Circles
- Volume & Surface Area
- Probability

Math 8 Intermediate Algebra II Honors

- Solving Equations
- Functions Review
- Complex Quadratics
- Polynomial Division
- Factoring Multivariable Polynomials
- Exponents and Logarithms
- Radicals
- Inequalities



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Science

Advanced Biology (College Level)

Objectives

Students will acquire introductory college-level biology content knowledge and skills. Emphasis is placed on inquiry skills and enduring conceptual understandings in four key areas: evolutionary processes and the diversity of life; biological systems as they use energy and molecules to grow, reproduce and maintain dynamic homeostasis; biological systems as they store, receive, transmit, and respond to information; the complex properties and interactions of living things.

The knowledge and skills acquired in this course will prepare highly-motivated students to excel on the College Board's Advanced Placement Biology* exam in May. Course content will broadly align with the College Board's AP Biology curriculum*.

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Texts & Reference Materials

- Campbell Biology AP Edition, 12th Ed. by Urry, Cain, & Wasserman. Pearson
- AP Biology: Pearson Test Prep Series for Campbell Biology
- Teacher-generated materials

Honors Science

Objectives

Students will recognize and understand concepts and processes of evolution; natural selection; genetics (variation and distribution); the relationships between genetic molecules and organisms; the history and energy of our solar system; the geology of Earth; climate change; the impact of human activity on climate and biodiversity; and particle physics. WSA's Science Curriculum is informed by the [Next Generation Science Standards](#) (NGSS).

Texts & Reference Materials

- Marshall Cavendish Education: Physics Matters, Chemistry Matters, Biology Matters
- Teacher-generated materials



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Content

Natural Selection & Evolution:

- Evidence of common ancestry and diversity
- The four factors of Natural Selection
- Adaptation of populations
- Natural Selection and environmental adaptation
- Environmental changes: speciation and extinction
- Lab: Battle of the Beaks Natural Selection Activity: students will simulate Darwin's finches and see how survival of the fittest can lead to evolution.

Genetics:

- Cellular division and differentiation
- Chromosomal inheritance
- Inheritable genetic variations
- Variation and distribution of traits

From Molecules to Organisms:

- Genes, proteins, and tissues
- Interacting body systems
- Feedback mechanisms and homeostasis
- Lab: Berry Full Of DNA: DNA Extraction

Earth & Space Science:

- Nuclear fusion and the Sun's energy
- The Big Bang Theory
- Orbital motions
- Evidence of plate tectonics
- Evidence of the Earth's history
- The creation of landforms
- Carbon cycling in the Earth's systems
- Coevolution of life on Earth
- The impacts of human activity on Earth systems
- Biodiversity, natural resources, and human sustainability
- Climate change and future impacts

Physics:

- Fission, fusion, and radioactive decay
- The Second Law of Thermodynamics
- Macroscopic energy due to particle position and motion
- Wave-particle duality of electromagnetic radiation



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Social Studies: World History I

Overarching Objectives

In accordance with their individual readiness, students will explore and analyze topics from high school World History frameworks. Emphasis will be placed on student acquisition of the following skills:

Research and Inquiry:

- Develop research skills by asking questions, gathering information from primary and secondary sources, and evaluating the reliability of sources

Critical Thinking:

- Analyze historical events and multiple perspectives to develop critical thinking skills
- Make reasoned judgments; compare and contrast the treatment of a topic in primary and secondary sources
- Analyze in detail a series of events as described in a text
- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis
- Summarize points of agreements and disagreement; and demonstrate their ability to reevaluate their thinking after exposure to new evidence and lines of reasoning

Communication:

- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives
- Practice communicating their ideas effectively through writing, speaking, and delivering visual presentations

Texts & Reference Materials

- Teacher-generated materials including historical periodicals and primary sources
- Document-based questions
- *NewsELA*

World History I

Classical Civilizations

- The Persian Empire: Structure and Influence
- Ancient Greece: City-States, Democracy, and Philosophy
- Ancient Rome: Republic to Empire, Governance and Law

World Religions and Philosophies

- Major World Religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam
- Philosophical Traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, Stoicism



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- The interaction and spread of religions through trade and conquest

The Middle Ages

- The Fall of Rome and the Rise of Feudalism in Europe
- Islamic Caliphates and the Golden Age of Islam
- The Byzantine Empire and its influence on Europe

The Age of Exploration

- Motivations for Exploration: Economic, Religious, and Political
- Major Explorers and their voyages: Columbus, Magellan, da Gama
- The impact of exploration on indigenous populations and global trade

The Renaissance and Reformation

- Cultural and Intellectual Movement of the Renaissance
- Impact of Humanism and key figures (e.g., Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo)
- The Protestant Reformation and its effects on Europe

The Age of Revolution

- The American Revolution: Causes and Consequences
- The French Revolution: Key Events and Ideals
- The Haitian Revolution and the fight for abolition

The Industrial Revolution

- Origins of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain
- Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts
- The rise of labor movements and responses to industrialization

Global Connection and Conflict

- Imperialism and Colonialism: European Expansion in Africa and Asia
- The Opium Wars and their impact on China
- The Scramble for Africa: Causes and Consequences



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World Languages

Mandarin

Students in Washington Square Academy's Mandarin Program take the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) Test at the appropriate level at the end of Grades 6, 7, and 8.

HSK is China's national, standardized test of proficiency in the Chinese language for non-native speakers (similar to the TOEFL in the United States). Students who successfully complete WSA's Mandarin Program are well on their way to obtaining full HSK certification, a qualification that may open many doors for them not just personally, in terms of a love and understanding of this beautiful language and culture, but also professionally, in terms of educational and employment opportunities.

Information on the relevant levels of certification can be found [HERE](#):

Grade 8: [HSK Level III](#)

Course materials for each grade level include elements of the HSK Curriculum as well as a variety of teacher-generated sources designed to motivate and inspire each individual student. At Grade 8, these materials are supplemented with [Cheng & Tsui's Integrated Chinese](#) texts and workbooks.

Spanish II

Texts & Reference Materials

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: ¡Avancemos! Level 1
Teacher-generated materials

Content

Grammar & Vocabulary:

- Preterite verb tense: -ar, -er, -ir, iy, irregular, and stem change
- Past perfect tense
- Estar + participle

Spanish Culture & Daily Life Through Literature, Song, and Creative Writing:

- "The Girl and the Squirrel"
- "Goldilocks"



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- “Jason’s Mother”
- “Am I a Gringo?”
- “Noises at Night”
- “The Secret”
- “The Stalker”
- Cultural connections: José Mujica
- “The Happy Man”
- “The Flip Flop”
- “The Ideal Boy”
- “Crazy Creatures”
- “He Who Gets Angry Loses”
- “The Enchanted Lake”
- Song: “Everything Changed”
- Creative writing: The Crazy Zoo