English
The 7th Grade English course is designed to develop various skills. Critical thinking is paramount in the first part of the year, as students work individually and collectively to respond to texts in more sophisticated ways than in the past. Using My Brother Sam is Dead, students perform formalist criticism, gauging authorial intent based on literary devices (imagery, descriptive language and especially irony); the text is selected to complement the Social Studies curriculum. Likewise, various documents from colonial America present opportunities for co-curricular work as well as skills development. Argument, logic and rhetoric are examined to augment students’ understanding of the tumultuous period in early American history, aid their discernment of current events, and enable a more critical approach to the national and popular culture in which these young people are increasingly involved. Virtually all of the work that students attempt is through the class website and other online resources; the innovative efforts of The School’s technology team are put to use in many ways. Written work is evaluated based on form and content; short assignments pave the way for longer essays, and students are encouraged to find their voice, or refine an already developed approach to analysis.

Mathematics
This semester began with the prerequisites for building a strong foundation in algebra. Students were challenged to explore their sense of numbers, describe patterns, and evaluate variables, expressions, and integers. They began to think algebraically as they investigated repeated multiplication using the formulas for area and perimeter, as well as powers, exponents and the order of operations. Students learned how to evaluate variable expressions, perform operations with integers, and plot points in a coordinate plane. Students used mathematical properties to simplify variable expressions, write and solve one and two-step equations and inequality equations. Student work was extended and deepened through the Box Project. For this in class investigation, students constructed rectangular boxes. This process required a review and application of operations with fractions and decimals, and calculation of costs for cuts, value of scraps, profit, perimeter, area, volume, and surface area. Students created the content for these rectangular boxes by writing and providing the solutions to three numerical expressions and word problems related to topics of their choice from across the curriculum. In addition to nightly homework assignments, weekly quizzes, tests, and Box Project assignments, the mathematics curriculum was further differentiated through independent work in the Enrichment Activity Center and research for the Great Mathematician Project.

Performing Arts: Elective
Every fall, each student is given the unique opportunity to participate in a Performing Arts Elective. The following ensembles are offered: Instrumental Ensemble, Dance Ensemble, Concert Choir, Concert Band, Drama and Jazz Ensemble. Groups are comprised of students from the entire middle division, and each group will have the opportunity to perform at two evening concerts during the school year. Students are expected to participate actively with a positive and respectful attitude, be prepared with instruments or other necessary materials, take risks willingly and demonstrate that they’ve made personal progress with regard to relevant skills.
Performing Arts: Music
This semester our integrated curriculum with Philadelphia will give the 7th grade students the opportunity to study the history of American popular music with an emphasis on blues and jazz. Within this unit the students will increase their proficiency and technique with mallets on the soprano, alto, and bass xylophones and metallophones. The students will have the opportunity to play the 12-bar blues scale and harmonic progressions in different keys. They will explore swing eighth notes, sixteenth note rhythm patterns, syncopation, melodic notation, and improvisation all incorporated with arrangements of jazz standards.

Science
Seventh grade ecology focuses on the process and nature of science, which includes its limits, levels of uncertainty and bias, and also the reasons for its reliability. Students’ current milkweed bug population study provides practice recording quantitative and qualitative data, and will eventually lead into a study of population growth, limiting factors and carrying capacity. Students are about to explore interactions among living organisms, including the movement of energy through trophic levels, the recycling of life's basic building blocks, and the causes and effects of limiting factors.

Social Emotional Learning
The Life Skills curriculum aims to help students understand that the decisions they make everyday impact themselves and their community. The overarching goals of the year focus on personal responsibility and strategies for effective decision-making. This is achieved through discussions of a variety of topics, including: nutrition, hygiene, puberty, sexuality, friendships and other relationships, media and cyber safety. Student will also have the opportunity to learn and practice effective stress managements and communication skills.

Social Studies
At the outset of Social Studies, we introduce the theme of the year, Self + Society: The Courage to Act. Discussing social activism in the 21st Century, we underscore the importance of decisions that individuals make, as well as decisions they elect not to make. As we study our first unit on the American Revolution, students are challenged to identify the complex decisions of the principals involved and realize that outcomes are far from guaranteed, and different figures took real and significant risks in pursuing independence. The events leading up to the American War of Independence are introduced and examined, especially the role of individuals in bringing about change. To illustrate the tension between the colonists and Britain on the eve of the Revolution, as well as the Revolution's causes, students work in groups to write and perform skits, bringing the major Acts Britain imposed on the colonies to life. To complete their understanding, we examine and analyze primary sources. Using the information gleaned from these sources, students complete independent research projects and work together to develop profiles of historical figures of the time. Consistently throughout the term, students read and watch the news, and current events are a critical element of classroom discussions.

Spanish Language/Literacy
The seventh graders began the year by becoming better acquainted with the geography of South America through map work, audio recordings and video footage. Students reviewed vocabulary pertaining to geographical features and popular pastimes when learning about South American capitals and describing the preferred activities of their inhabitants. These activities were used as springboard into our first unit on city life. In this unit, students utilized vocabulary pertaining to places in a city, described the locations of these places in their neighborhoods using the verb “estar” and prepositions, and worked on understanding and giving directions when navigating through the various neighborhoods of NYC.
In regards to history and culture, students continued their study of South America, investigating the independence efforts led by Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Miranda and the formation of La Gran Colombia. This particular focus served as an interdisciplinary connection with their Social Studies unit on Philadelphia, thus helping to further reinforce important themes in both domains. Students were presented with the challenge of engaging in spontaneous conversation when discussing these historical events and expressing their ideas and viewpoints.

**Visual Arts**

In the art studio this year, seventh graders will continue to develop their technical skills while strengthening their confidence as expressive artists. Students started the year with a challenge to design the letterforms of their names to create a personalized portfolio that expresses their interests and personality. We will follow this work with an interdisciplinary connection to the students’ jazz study in music class. Students will listen carefully to a playlist of swing by musicians. They will consider the range of rhythms, instruments, style, and timbre and how they might represent their aural experience visually with watercolor paint. Students will discuss work by a variety of visual artists whose work was influenced by music including Wassily Kandinsky, Stuart Davis, Georgia O’Keeffe, Piet Mondrian, and Keith Haring. In the process, students will experiment with watercolor techniques, color mixing and non-objective compositions. Toward the end of the semester seventh graders will begin work on a mixed media piece inspired by personal writing that linked to their study of identity and the construction of self.

**Wellness**

Grade 7 students began their year in Wellness class learning about and participating in a variety of fitness activities. Because one goal of the Wellness program at The School at Columbia University is to help the students find ways to stay healthy throughout their lifetimes, the students completed assessments that revealed their levels of fitness and gave each student a benchmark with which they can compare their scores as they move throughout the year. The classes will return to the fitness assessment two more times during the year so that they can see how the physical activities in which we participate throughout the year affect their fitness levels.