



# The Herald

May 2013

A Publication of the MCA Office of  
Advancement and Development



## Thinking About Next Year

Even though school has just ended for the 2012-2013 school year, thoughts turn to the curriculum for next year. MCA continually looks for ways to improve our already rich curriculum and class offerings for our students. Perhaps it's finding a new online site where kindergartners can practice their reading skills, or developing new hands-on projects for fifth graders, or creating new courses in middle school. Our objective is to always provide our students with timely, challenging, and engaging material for their educational benefit.

This month's *The Herald* focuses on MCA's academic elective courses and valuable fine arts electives for our middle school students. These classes are selected based upon the school's philosophy of education, which requires meaningful, substantive material that promotes evaluation, generalization, and synthesis. Secondly, but of equal importance, a teacher's passion for the subject is factored into the selection.

This year, MCA is proud to announce forty-three elective offerings. These classes present the students with opportunities to explore various interests ranging from athletics to the arts to the sciences and philosophies. The passion our teachers have for the various subject areas most definitely carries over in their presentation, creating varied and rich material for our students. Most of the electives are one trimester in length, enabling the students to participate in up to six per year.

Even if you're a kindergarten parent, and middle school seems far, far away, we hope you take a moment to read about these new classes for next year. They are a continuation and a reflection of the solid academics that provide the foundation for learning at MCA.



*Students in Mr. Livengood's "How Stuff Works" class see what a sound wave of 60Hz can do to various solutions and learn how sound can be used as a tool.*

## MCA Middle School Elective Offerings 2013-2014

### Robotics

This course is an opportunity to experience real-world engineering, computer science, design, and mathematics and physics problems. Students will learn project management and team-building skills as they problem-solve together on this competition robotics team.

### Introduction to Philosophy (Grade 8)

Behind every action is an idea; behind every idea is a philosophy. Ideas have consequences. In this course, we will study a range of philosophies, from the Greeks to the post-modernists, and the consequences of their ideas. We will learn how to approach actions and ideas through the philosophies behind them.

### Basic Sports Skills

During this elective, students will learn, improve, practice, and master the basic skills of sports such as football, volleyball, basketball, track, soccer, softball/baseball, field hockey, and many others. By the end of each sport, students will take the skills learned and use them in real game situations.

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## **Beginning Band**

This course is offered to students with no previous music experience who plan on being in band in high school. Emphasis for this class will be mainly on development of basic technical skills. Students will be responsible for two or more public performances during the school year. The instruments in a band program consist of the brass, which includes trumpet, horn, trombone, baritone or euphonium, and tuba; woodwind, which includes flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, and bassoon; and percussion. The students are required to either buy or rent their own instruments and purchase a book. After the completion of this course the beginning band student may choose to take MCA Band which is offered both 2nd and 3rd trimesters. Beginning Band students from the 2012-2013 school year may also choose to take this class as a review or even to learn a new band instrument.

## **Drawing**

This course is designed to be a classical-style studio course. Students will learn about specific kinds of drawings and techniques such as line, contour, value, color media, ink, charcoal, still life, self-portraiture, etc. There will be "how-to" tutorials in the class. Manga cartooning will be covered as one of many topics. This course will be a good choice for students who want to improve their art skills and/or are looking to continue art in high school.

## **Let's Argue! The Art of Argument (Grade 7)**

This course will educate students on the differences between what is a weak argument and what is a strong argument. In today's society, it is vital that we have the capability to effectively lay out our ideas in a reasonable and coherent fashion. The goal of this course will be to identify logical fallacies, which are incorrect or weak reasoning, and provide the ability to identify and eliminate those fallacies from our arguments.

## **History Through Math**

Where did math come from? Who thought up all those algebra symbols and why? What's the story behind ...negative numbers?...the metric system?...quadratic equations?...sine and cosine? Find the answers to these questions and more as we learn the story of math, from ancient "mathmagicians" to the world of modern science.

## **American Folklore: Hornswagglers, Heroes, and Superstition**

In this course, students will survey genres, methodology, and theories within the academic field of folklore. We will read examples of myths, tales, legends, and literature connected to American folklore. Students will explore examples of music, folk art, and movies.

## **Intermediate Spanish (Spanish 1b, year-long course)**

This course, a continuation of Spanish 1a, will continue to teach topics such as grammar, vocabulary, and cultural concepts, providing the students with further language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will begin to develop a wide range of vocabulary and the necessary grammatical structures to support growing Spanish fluency. By the end of the course, they will be able to converse, read, and write in basic, grammatically correct sentences in Spanish. Spanish 1a is a prerequisite for this three-trimester course.

## **Poetry Place**

"Oh, the wings that shall carry me away  
To far away places where I dream and play."

Do you love to write poetry? If so, come and join our class where we will write, illustrate and publish our work. We will host a poetry reading where parents, friends, and the community can come to hear your pieces in a coffee house type of setting. Come, let your emotions drift through the pen to allow others to see and know you better.



## **Fine Arts I**

This course will follow the Core Knowledge curriculum while focusing on two -dimensional design and traditional art media. Examples of art media used in this course are drawing, acrylic painting, watercolor painting, printmaking, etc. While this course is considered a beginning course, students can take the class more than once, as projects change from year to year.

## **Advanced Music**

This yearlong, high-level course focuses on performance. Students must be self-motivated, able to work well with others, and able to count eighth-note rhythms. Students are required to perform in at least two Christmas concerts, two spring concerts and other events, possibly outside regular school hours. Students may have the opportunity to travel as well. This course also covers the requirements necessary to play percussion in high school bands or orchestra. Students interested in Advanced Music are required to do a light, non-threatening audition to make sure the student understands the basic concepts of reading and counting music.

## **Living Well**

Get ready to be healthy! Join this elective for an exciting approach to a lifelong healthy lifestyle. This elective introduces students to various forms of fun fitness, such as Zumba, yoga, and kickboxing. Healthy cooking, label reading, dealing with teenage self-esteem and peer pressure are also among the many things incorporated into this elective. Special events include visits to or from fitness specialists, nutrition experts, and health/fitness facilities. Healthy habits developed at an early age reap the most benefit.

## **Graphic Design**

Graphic design is powerful in today's highly visual world. Quality graphic design makes the difference between a top-selling item and one that disappears among its competition. In this level I class students learn graphic design skills and work in teams to fulfill challenges of real world graphic design artists. The class will brainstorm, design, revise and present products. Products may include posters, Tshirts, labels, stationary sets, newsletters, business cards, brochures, magazine design, billboard design, etc.

## **History through War**

This course will take a unique spin on the study of history. From the beginning of time man has engaged in war. Over the centuries warfare has served many different purposes, such as conquering new land, pursuing riches, revenge, and the pursuit of love. We will study many examples, from the Palestinians versus the Israelites, to Alexander the Great conquering the known world in thirteen years, to the vicious battles between the Carthaginians and Romans, to understand how war has shaped humanity. Students will understand and analyze how and why warfare shapes the course of history.

## **Cooking To The Core**

The Core Knowledge curriculum teaches us about various cultures. This class will introduce students to the foods and activities of the cultures we study. We will prepare meals, decorate tables, and discuss the nutritional value of the foods chosen. Twice a week we will meet in the gym for activities. There will be a \$5.00 supply fee for this class. The class is limited to 12 students.

## **Advanced Spanish—(year-long course)**

This course will maintain and build the skills gained in Intermediate Spanish. This course is open only to students who have successfully completed Intermediate Spanish. Students will have conversations in Spanish and read works of literature in Spanish. Students who successfully complete this course will be ready for Honors Spanish II at the MCA high school.

## **Sports Science**

In this course, students will learn to participate physically in experiments that allow them to compete with themselves in an effort to prove or disprove some record or physical action, or improve their physical ability through experimentation and problem solving. They will also research and defend their points of view with their classmates in an effort to explore and teach each other regarding different actions or motions in related sports. Students will also generate graphs and spreadsheets to compare and predict some action or motion involved in some aspect of a sport.



## **Science Olympiad**

During this class you will explore different areas of science, which may include engineering, forensic science, environmental science, food science, and geology. We will design and construct towers, bottle rockets, and aquifers (to name a few!). We will explore the chemistry of food, learn about the environment around us, and different diseases. Our goal will be to prepare for the Science Olympiad competition by learning about various areas of science and practicing experimental design. This class requires superior motivation and a willingness to compete in one or two Saturday competitions.

## **Psychology/Sociology**

Have you ever wondered why your friends act the way they do? How about why your parents tell you eating with your fingers at a nice restaurant is unacceptable, but using them at McDonald's is completely okay? In this class, we will investigate all of this and more! We will conduct various psychological and social experiments to better understand ourselves and the world around us.

## **Fitness/Physical Conditioning**

This course is an intense physical education class designed to give you the opportunity to learn fitness concepts and conditioning techniques used for obtaining optimal physical fitness. Students will learn the basic fundamentals of strength training, aerobic training, and overall fitness training and conditioning. Course includes both classroom and activity sessions. Students will be empowered to make wise choices, meet challenges, and develop positive life-long behaviors in fitness, wellness, and movement activity.

## **Advanced Art**

The class will follow Core Knowledge topics, but projects will be geared toward a higher level of instruction. Projects will include use of traditional and non-traditional art media and also drawing, painting, printmaking, clay sculpture, etc. This class will not repeat projects from previous fine art classes, but terminology and instructional information will be reviewed.

## **Art of Problem Solving**

Do you enjoy solving challenging math problems? If so, this class is for you. We will learn many competition math techniques as we prepare for the Mathcounts competition and the AMC 8. We will also learn many tricks to help us on the SAT and the ACT as we take mathematical concepts to a deeper level.

## **O! Bill Shakespeare- Hamlet, King Lear, and The Tempest**

This course will survey Elizabethan theater and Elizabethan language and customs through reading three plays by William Shakespeare. Students will also be introduced to playwriting by writing an original one-act play. Class meetings will involve lectures and discussions on readings.

## **Minecraft**

Minecraft is a popular online simulation software program. This student driven elective will teach students how to use and play Minecraft. Using this software tool, students will also explore concepts such as online collaboration, problem solving, and programming, all while tying in curricular topics to everyday projects.

## **Yearbook**

Document your 2013-2014 school year in photos. This class will be privileged and responsible for creation of MCA's yearbook. From page layout to electronic design, we will capture classes (K-8), sports teams, important events and much, much more. This year two students (who have previous yearbook experience) will serve as co-editors of this student created publication, working closely with advisor to create task-oriented teams and then monitor their progress. Students new to this class will learn design basics and how to utilize the web based yearbook site. Graphic design and photography experience are a plus but not required. New and returning students all welcome.



### **3- Dimensional Design**

This course will follow the Core Knowledge curriculum course of study while focusing on creating 3-dimensional forms. Examples of art media used in this course are clay sculpture, wire sculpture, wood/ cardboard mobiles, books, paper, etc.

### **Journalism**

Are you creative enough to write digital magazine articles? Do you have the “snooper” skills to research information everyone wants to know? If so, this is the place for you! We will create and maintain a digital magazine written by middle-schoolers for middle-schoolers. Each week, we will post new articles about academics, sports, fashion, books, movies, video games, and more. We will create a “must read” place to get the scoop on what is going on in your world.

### **Health , Life Skills, and Fitness (6th Grade)**

If you are ready to have fun and learn at the same time, this is the elective for you! Topics covered will include introduction to health and wellness, self-esteem, decision making, how to get good grades, peer pressure, stress management, substance use/abuse, nutrition, diet analysis, disease prevention, environmental/community health and much more. In this elective we will learn about health and life, do fun fitness activities, group activities, hear from some health experts, and many more fun and healthy things. So let's get healthy together!

### **How Stuff Works**

In this class, students will learn to investigate a problem of some type of equipment and troubleshoot for a solution, evaluate an action or occurrence, generate hypotheses for the action, then do research that proves or disproves the hypothesis. Students will learn to use prior knowledge to analytically solve problems and expand their thinking.

### **Introduction to Programming**

In this course, students enter the world of computer science by learning how to create animations, computer games, and interactive projects. Using Scratch, a graphical programming language developed at MIT, students learn fundamental programming concepts such as variables, loops, conditional statements, and event handling. As they teach a mischievous cat to dance, explore a maze, or play games, students learn how to use math and computer code to think creatively. The course will show students how to make and import objects, create audio recordings, and use them to develop interactive projects. No previous programming skills are required, but students should be comfortable using a computer and browser, and managing files. Students are expected to be familiar with standard computer operations (e.g., login, cut & paste, email attachments, etc.).

### **Raking in the Dough**

Is your piggy bank empty? Do you want to know how to fill it? In this class, you will learn how to start a business, play the stock market and get rich, and (most importantly!) how to not lose your money!

### **Agriscience**

Ever wonder where your food comes from or stopped to think where you would be without agriculture? This course is an introduction to agriculture and farming. The course will cover an introduction to animal science, plant science, agricultural technology, and agricultural opportunities. Learn how to grow your own food, care for livestock and discuss the controversies surrounding modern farming

### **Craft**

This course will follow the Core Knowledge curriculum course of study while focusing on traditional and fine craft media; for example, weaving, book making, stitchery, pottery and jewelry making. There is no prerequisite for this course.



## **Geometric Art**

Learn how the ancient world used only a compass and a straight edge to construct basic geometric shapes. Then use those skills to create beautiful works of art, while learning about fractals, tessellations, transformations, and other geometric concepts.

## **Nordic Mythology and Legends of the British Isles**

Students in this class will study Nordic mythology and traditions of the pre-Christian Nordic peoples, emphasizing the Viking period, as expressed in literature, archaeological finds, and art. We will also explore the legends and myths from the British Isles.

## **Computer Skills**

The Computer Skills elective is a course that covers the North Carolina Eighth Grade Technology Proficiency Standards. Students will learn such things as how to use different tools, collaborate with peers, identify and solve hardware / software problems, as well as create multimedia projects. Topics covered in core classes, along with current events, will be elaborated through project-based learning.

## **Journaling through Nature**

Use a loupe to study ants as you discover how they use chemicals to lead others to their food source. See and draw a caterpillar's spiracles. Learn how to determine the gender of a moth and record in your journal along with other fascinating facts based on intense observation. This class uses in-depth daily observations and research to create individual nature journals from blank books. Plan to spend time absorbing the miniscule details of nature that are too often overlooked. Daily outdoor excursions on our school's campus provide an abundance of nature based observation experiences. We will grow an intense attention to details and ability to record sights, sounds and smells while working individually. Grade not based on artistic skills.

## **Creative Writing**

Do you have a knack for creating and telling stories? In this class, we will write two books. One book will be a short chapter book, while the other will be a picture book. Our publisher is just waiting for new authors to come and share their stories. Once our books are published, we will be sharing the picture books with elementary classes. Check out the books written by the class from 2011 in the library!

## **Living Well**

Get ready to get healthy! Join this elective for an exciting approach to a lifelong healthy lifestyle. This elective introduces students to various forms of fun fitness, such as zumba, yoga, and kickboxing. Healthy cooking, label reading, dealing with teenage self-esteem and peer pressure are also among the many things incorporated into this elective. Special events include visits to or from fitness specialists, nutrition experts, and health/fitness facilities. Healthy habits developed at an early age reap the most benefit.

## **Chorus**

Renowned vocalist Melva Houston will teach our first MCA Chorus elective. In this elective, students will learn the fundamentals of singing, practice in a variety of music genres and prepare for a performance at the end of the year.

## **Fine Arts, Too**

This course is open to students who have taken Fine Art I and would like to continue using traditional art media: drawing, acrylic painting, watercolor painting, printmaking, etc. This course will follow Core Knowledge curriculum expectations. Please note: this course will not repeat lessons.

## **Geography of a Changing World**

The world we live in is constantly on the move, yet always connected like never before. Geography is more than studying names of cities and famous lakes. Geography is the study of how humans move and interact with each other. This course will take a look at all of the continents and study those who live there and what their impact is on this ever-changing world.