



# Electives Explorer

## An Insider's Guide to Robinson's Electives

Welcome to Robinson! The **Electives Explorer** was created to help students select electives. There are over thirty elective classes offered to middle school students, and choosing the right classes for you can be overwhelming. Hopefully this guide will help you make an informed choice.

When choosing electives, keep **your** interests and hobbies in mind. For example, if you enjoy acting you could try Drama. If you're interested in music you could sign up for Band, Orchestra or Chorus. However, trying something new could be fun as well. Robinson offers Introduction to Foreign Language and four different languages for students to study. Which one do you want to try?

Trying out a variety of electives is a great way to explore possible career fields you may have an interest in. For example, if you are considering reporting or writing, try out Creative Writing, Yearbook Production or Newspaper Journalism. If you would like to explore fields involving technology, check out the Computers in Art, Computer solutions or Coding & Innovative Technology courses.

While most electives offered are semester electives, there are some electives that are year-long. Examples are Band, Yearbook and World Languages. Even though languages are electives, they are high school courses and require good study habits and skills. Because languages are high school courses, the grades you get while taking them will count in your high school grade point average.

Some electives require a recommendation, application and/or an audition, such as Advanced Band and

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Yearbook. Although a few electives require a lot of work and prior knowledge, there are several electives that are available for novices to take.

After you have chosen your electives, you may have an opportunity to talk with your counselor about your course selection. How many electives do you get to take? Well, this all depends on the electives you choose. Here are your options:

- Two full year electives
- One full year elective and two semester electives
- Four semester electives

Read on to see what Robinson has to offer YOU!

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### Middle School Counselors

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# Business & Information Technology

## Computer Solutions

**Length of Course:** Semester—open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** Computer Solutions provides students with the necessary skills to use the computer as a problem-solving tool and to complete a variety of projects. Basic touch keyboarding instruction is provided in the course as well as an introduction to Microsoft Office software applications.

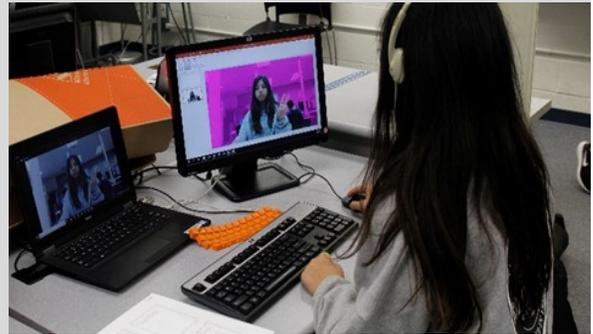
**Course Highlights:** In Computer Solutions, students gain a foundational knowledge of the Microsoft Office Suite: Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and Access.

**Benefits:** Computer Solutions is a course that teaches valuable computer skills that will be used both in high school and college. As a result of taking this course, students will quickly see a positive change in their ability to use the computer to enhance school projects and improve their ability to clearly communicate their ideas through reports, charts, and visual presentations.

**A word from the teacher:** Students who have taken Computer Solutions frequently stop by my classroom or e-mail me telling me that this course has been one of the most valuable courses they have taken, as they use the skills they learned everyday in their personal lives as well as for creating projects, reports, and various documents for their classes.

**Who should take this course:** Everyone! No student should leave middle school without taking Computer Solutions. I am repeatedly told by core teachers that they can always tell if a student has taken Computer Solutions and they wish the course were a requirement for all students.

**Homework Requirements:** None



## Coding and Innovative Technologies 1

**Length of Course:** Semester—open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** Computer Solutions

**Course Description:** Coding and Innovative Technologies introduces students to coding through hands-on projects. Students learn introductory coding concepts using a variety of apps and interactive web sites such as Code.org, HTML, CSS, Notepad ++ and Scratch.

**Course Highlights:** Students design and program a webpage about a topic of interest. Hands-on projects are completed each class period.

**Homework Requirements:** None

**Who should take this course:** Students who enjoy working with computers and enjoy hands on projects.



## Coding and Innovative Technologies 2

**Length of Course:** Semester, open to eighth graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** Computer Solutions and Coding & Innovative Technologies 1

**Course Description:** Building on the foundational knowledge gained in Coding & Innovative Technologies 1, Coding & Innovative Technologies 2 allows stu-

dents to further develop their coding skills through hands-on projects. Students will learn more advanced coding concepts through a variety of apps and interactive websites.

In addition, they will actively use technology to complete small group or individual projects.

**Course Highlights:** Students gain an understanding of how computer programs interact with the physical world using the Adafruit Circuit Playground.

**Homework Requirements:** None

**Who should take this course:** Students who have an interest in computer programming and enjoy hands-on projects.

# English Electives

## Action Literacy

**Length of Course:** Semester— Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisite for Course:** None- enrollment is based on teacher recommendation and student data

**Course Highlights:** Instruction focuses on the skills and strategies necessary to improve reading comprehension while using paired fiction and nonfiction, media literacy, and research.

**Benefits:** Students will benefit from the small class size of this course as well as opportunities to work one-on-one with the teacher, in small groups, and independently. Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility students will learn through modeled instruction, guided practice, and the demonstration of understanding through independent practice.

**A word from the teacher:** The goal is for students to understand how to apply reading skills and strategies to support their independent reading and course work.

**Homework Assignments:** All work is completed in class, but students are encouraged to read at home daily.

**Who should take this course:** 7th and 8th graders who have low-passing or have failed the Reading SOL (375-419) and are reading below grade level performance. Students possess word attack skills and have literal or low-level comprehension skills.



## Action Literacy

**Length of Course:** Year— Open to 8th graders only

**Prerequisite for Course:** None- enrollment is based on teacher recommendation and student data

**Course Highlights:** The year-long Action Literacy course integrates REWARDS® Secondary to support students' literacy using multisyllabic word reading strategies. This research-based program is implemented as an element of a workshop model class that includes comprehension and writing strategy instruction using high-interest texts.

**Benefits:** Students will benefit from the use of high interest text sets and material from core content classes, with the goal that students can apply strategies across the curriculum.

**A word from the teacher:** It is important that students understand how to apply reading skills and strategies to support their independent reading and course work.

**Homework Assignments:** All work is completed in class, but students are encouraged to read at home daily.

**Who should take this course:** Students who could benefit from more support in multisyllabic fluency/decoding, in addition to reading comprehension.

## Creative Writing



**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:**

Creative Writing offers students the chance to write about anything they want to write about...fairy tales, science fiction, dystopian short stories, poetry, realistic fiction, etc. They sky is the limit! Students sharpen their writing skills with an emphasis on revisions and learning to accurately evaluate their own writing.

**Course Highlights:** Focusing on writing skills in the first part of the semester, students write creative short stories and enjoy receiving feedback from the teacher and fellow students on a class blog. Students work on individual and group writing projects for the second nine weeks and enjoy choosing their own topics and genres throughout the entirety of the course.

**Benefits:** Frequent conferencing with the teacher and peers can increase writing skills dramatically over the course of the semester. Confidence shines as writing habits transform. Daily writing warm ups are a fun way for



**Student Interview with Camden Snyder**

**What is your favorite genre to write?**

I like to write fiction romance because I enjoy creating relationships between my characters.

**What style of writing do you prefer?**

I like to write long stories because it gives me time to experiment with my writing and foreshadow different events.

**What is your favorite thing about this class?**

My favorite thing about this class is that I can interact with other people, yet also write on my own about things I choose. Everyone in class is friendly and it's just fun.

students to experiment

with writing. Many of these warm ups develop into full-fledged stories!

**A word from the teacher:** Students enjoy choosing their own topics to write about in Creative Writing and opportunities to collaborate with peers. Computers for everyone, comfy pillows, and a laid-back environment help to create the perfect writing atmosphere for students.

**Homework Requirements:** NONE!

**Who should take this course:** This class is perfect for students who love to write AND for students who wish to improve their writing skills in a fun, non-threatening environment.



# English Electives

## Learning Through Participation (LAP)

(Formerly Read 180)

**Length of Course:** Year—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisite for Course:** None- enrollment is based on teacher recommendation and student data

**Course Highlights:** Instruction focuses on building skills and strategies necessary to improve reading comprehension, develop vocabulary, promote the application of reading strategies in all content areas, build reading stamina/ motivation to read, as well as improve writing skills.

**Benefits:** Students will benefit from the small class size of this course as well as opportunities to work one-on-one with the teacher, in small groups, and independently. Using the Gradual Release of Responsibility students will learn through modeled instruction, guided practice, and the demonstration of understanding through independent practice. Students who take this course will increase their confidence when reading for pleasure as well as across content areas.

**A word from the teacher:** The goal is for students to understand how to apply reading skills and strategies to support their independent reading and course work.

**Homework Assignments:** All work is completed in class, but students are encouraged to read at home daily.

**Who should take this course:** 7th or 8th-grade students who have low-passing or have failed the Reading SOL (375-419), are reading below expected grade-level performance, lack word attack skills, and are decoding on or near grade level.



## Media Communication

**Length of Course:** Year—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**TV BROADCASTING**

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** Be an On-Air Broadcaster, Classroom Reporter, Broadcast Technician and a Producer by joining this class. Students who have a drive to ask important questions, get to know people, and find solutions to issues facing the school community. Students will develop their own ideas for stories, conduct on-camera interviews, set up and use professional broadcast equipment, and edit video clips into a professional news story.

**Course Highlights:** Serve the community with news updates. Be involved in events and activities.

**Benefits:** This class encompasses the skills required for students to achieve success in today's world; to communicate information accurately, work independently and be accountable, and act with empathy and respect. Participants in journalism gain experience in applying these



essential principles in all areas of their lives.

**A word from the teacher:** This course will introduce students to professional technology, but the underlying elements of the course are compassion, accountability and the importance of organization and focus to accomplish personal goals.

**Homework Requirements:** Time will be provided in class to accomplish all requirements.

**Who should take this course:** Students who are curious about the world and are motivated to find answers to their questions! This class is ideal for students who like to meet and talk with people, who like to hear about other people's lives, who are interested in using camera and video editing technology, and who are interested in student leadership, public speaking, and supporting a positive school community.

# Newspaper Journalism

## The Medallion Staff

**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** Students in this elective are the newspaper staff for the middle school's online newspaper, *The Medallion*. Students learn basic publication and journalism skills focusing on writing articles and creating infographics.

**Course Highlights:** Students in Newspaper Journalism enjoy:

- Interviewing students, teachers and faculty.
- Writing articles and creating infographics about topics that interest them...sports, technology, school news, books, etc.
- Staying up to date with current events and discussing what is happening in the world.
- Using Piktochart to create infographics.

**Benefits:** Students will improve their writing over the course of the semester. Completing articles for *The Medallion* and other in-class projects provide students with the time and practice needed to develop and perfect writing skills.

**A word from the teacher:** My goal is to provide students with opportunities to develop as writers and journalists. Because students choose their own topics to report on and know that they will be published, they are enthusiastic about their writing. Student journalists work hard at the revision and editing process to ensure their article is just right. This class provides a perfect opportunity for students to sharpen writing, research, and editing skills in a fun and stimulating environment.

**Homework:** NONE!

**Who should take this course:**

Students who:

- enjoy working in groups with friends.
- wish to be published in the school's online newspaper.
- are thinking of making journalism a career.
- would like to be a part of a fun, enthusiastic, and busy newspaper team.

## Reading



**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** This is a class for students who like to read and often feel they don't have enough time to do so. It is also for those students who don't mind reading but may have trouble finding books they like.

**Course Highlights:** Students spend the class reading books they have chosen themselves. They are permitted to go to the Media Center on a regular basis or chose books from my classroom library. Students also bring books from home to read or even bring their kindles.

**Benefits:** Reading is a skill, the more you do it, the better you get at it. People who are avid readers generally write better, have well developed vocabularies, and do better in school.

**A word from the teacher:** I love to read and have all my life. I read young adult fiction constantly and am always "selling" books to kids. This class is very relaxing and is a great way to do something educationally beneficial for yourself while destressing a bit.

**Homework:** NONE !

**Additional Info:** Some students enjoy this class so much, they take it in both seventh and eighth grade.

**Quote from a student:** "Reading is a fun class to take, especially if you enjoy reading. In class, you basically read for the entire period. After you read a book you have to fill out a form to prove that you read it and to get credit for the pages, but that only takes about 15 minutes. We can read whatever we want to read."



**Length of Course:** Year—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Application:** You must complete an application to be a part of this class. Please email Mrs. Forte for an application at: amforte@fcps.edu

**Course Description:** Students learn basic publication and journalism skills focusing on writing articles, photography, interviewing and designing layouts for the Robinson Middle School yearbook, The Sentry.

**Course Highlights:** Working hard to create the middle-school's yearbook from September through April and then holding it in your hands, seeing your hard work published in May.



## Yearbook Production

### The Sentry Staff

It's an incredible feeling of accomplishment.

**Benefits:** Students gain real-life skills in this elective. Deadlines must be met, and staffers have to take responsibility for the section or pages they are in charge of. Students become leaders, journalistic writers and photographers in yearbook class.

**A word from the teacher:** The students in this class become a family, and the yearbook room, a home. Staffers are all working toward a common goal, and for many of them, it becomes a passion. This is something they can continue in high school and perhaps a career in journalism.

**Homework Requirements:**

Some homework required.

**Who should take this course:**

- Photographers, writers and designers, or students who would like to learn these skills.
- People who aren't afraid of working hard and having fun!

**Additional Info:** Since we are a "family" and things can get rather stressful around deadline time, we celebrate a great deal in this class including birthdays, completed deadlines, holidays, and sometimes just for fun.



# Family & Consumer Science

## FACS 1 & 2

**Length of Course:** Year or Semester - Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** Family and Consumer Sciences prepares students to begin their journey toward becoming independent, productive citizens of the world. The aim of FACS courses is that all students increase their ability to act responsibly and productively, create solutions to everyday problems, utilize technology and equipment effectively and maintain healthy lifestyles and relationships in personal and family settings.

**Course Highlights:** The FACS curriculum includes the following units of study: Nutrition and Wellness; Personal Development & Relationships; Goal development; Time management and study skills; and Career Exploration. During the Nutrition and Wellness unit, students will prepare a variety of food as a team. Individual sewing projects will vary depending on course level but will progress in difficulty from level 1 to yearlong being most intensive to

include machine produced items such as pillows and P.J. bottoms.

**Benefits:** Family and Consumer Sciences prepares students to acquire personal skills now and plan ways to transfer those skills to the workplace, assume appropriate individual and family roles, learn how to balance work and family life and acquire skills and attitudes that contribute to the good of community and society.

**A word from the teacher:** If you are creative, enjoy sharing ideas and have a desire to learn skills that will benefit you for a life time – **FACS Wants You!!**

**Homework Requirements:** Very minimal homework requirements. Home projects may be assigned to reinforce classroom learning.



**Who should take this course:** This course is designed for students who wish to learn, help others, complete various hands-on sewing or cooking projects, and make smart life choices now as well as in the future. Level 1 FACS explores a simple hand stitch project, Level 2 FACS will include hand stitching

an introduction to the sewing machine, FACS yearlong will incorporate reading sewing patterns and machine sewing. Projects will vary each semester so students will not repeat take home activities.



# General Electives

## Peer Helping

**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** Recommendation of elementary/middle school counselor

**Course Description:** This is an elective course designed to train and facili-

tate a peer helper program in the middle school. The course provides an opportunity for students to develop their support and leadership skills in assisting others.

**Course Highlights:** Students are taught to help peers by learning to be more effective listeners, developing friendship skills, becoming group leaders, and being positive role models. They also enjoy serving as guides on Back to School Night, Electives Expo night, and at the rising 7th grade student and parent visits.

**Benefits:** Peer Helping is a fun way to learn and practice really useful skills. Student activities may include mentoring, support to peers, orientation of new students, elementary outreach, and community service programs.

**A word from the teacher:** Course topics may include self-esteem and self-



exploration, goal setting, school success skills, effective communication skills, peer refusal skills, and decision-making and problem-solving techniques.

**Homework Requirements:** Very little. **Who should take this course:** Anyone wanting to learn better communication and leadership skills.



# SGA **Length of Course:** Year—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** An application and recommendation signatures are required.

**Course Description:** Robinson's Student Government Association (SGA) is a leadership development class that focuses on improving participation in school activities, enhancing school spirit, and developing skills to plan, execute and lead school-wide events. SGA is a wonderful class for students who want to get more involved in Robinson and want to make a difference in the school's culture and climate.

**Course Highlights:** Students will plan, promote, and carry out exciting events including Homecoming spirit week, dances, sports tournaments, fundraising events, staff/student appreciation days, class competitions, and much more!

**Benefits:** Students will gain experience working with peers and Robinson's faculty. They will foster skills needed to be leaders and positive role models in the school. SGA is a fun class that gives students the freedom and power to create events they want to see at school. If a student is interested in high school SGA or Class Council, Middle School SGA is a great place to gain experience.

**A word from the teacher:** SGA is a unique course because students drive the direction of the class and the events we host. We look for students who are responsible, hardworking, and positive people.

**Homework Requirements:** Some events are held after school and students will be required to stay after on the days of their events.

**Who should take this course:** Outgoing, artistic, creative, school spirited, self-motivated, technology-savvy, excitable students who have ideas on how to improve Robinson!



# Fine Arts - Theater Arts

## Theatre Arts Appreciation

**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** Students develop an appreciation of theatre and acting through variety of performance activities and theatre games! Students engage their imaginations while building communication, collaboration, and creative thinking skills.

**Course Highlights:** We focus on creating a warm, supportive, inclusive atmosphere so students feel free to express themselves working on creating scenes, improvisation, physical theatre, and more!

**A word from the teacher:** Our goal is to provide a safe space as students explore the world of performing where students take pride in their individuality and feel confident while doing so.

**Homework Requirements:** None!

**Who should take this course:** Everyone! Great for those curious

about performing, seeking to build confidence, or strengthen acting skills! This is a prerequisite for the Advanced Drama course.



## Advanced Theatre Arts Appreciation

**Length of Course:** Year—8th graders only

**Prerequisites for Course:** Theatre Arts Appreciation and/or recommendation of the teacher.

**Course Description:** Students apply and expand their theatre skills by functioning as a professional theatre company. For the serious theatre student who is interested and committed to in-depth theatre exploration.

**Course Highlights:** Students explore auditioning, playwriting, directing, technical theatre, stage fighting and more! Stu-

dents are invited on our NYC Theatre field trip in June.

**A word from the teacher:** Through the year-long intensive we work as an ensemble to investigate, learn, and grow. Advanced Drama is a memorable full year opportunity for the dedicated theatre person.

**Homework Requirements:** Special projects and rehearsal.

**Who should take this course:** This course is for focused, passionate theatre students.

# Fine Arts - Music

## Beginning Band

**Length of Course:** Year

**Prerequisites for Course:** No prior band or music experience is required for participation in Beginning Band.

**Course Description:** Beginning Band is offered to both 7th and 8th grade students. With the help of the band teacher, students select an instrument and use method books and sheet music to learn how to play the instrument.

**Course Highlights:** Beginning Band performs several times during the year. They perform at two or three school concerts and they perform at an annual clinic/spring trip.

**Who should take this course:** Anyone who has an interest in playing a band instrument and making music is encouraged to participate in Beginning Band!



The spring trip is a great way for band, orchestra, and chorus students to end a year of hard work.



**"Without band, it's just school!"**

~RBSS band student

## Intermediate Band



**Length of Course:** Year

**Prerequisites for Course:** Prior band experience and a successful audition are required for participation in Intermediate Band.

**Course Description:** Intermediate Band is offered to both 7th and 8th grade students. Students participate in band rehearsals and work on advancing instrument and ensemble techniques through method books and sheet music.

**Course Highlights:** Intermediate Band performs several times during the year. They perform at three school concerts and they

perform at an annual clinic/spring trip. Intermediate Band students are encouraged to participate in the District Solo and Ensemble Festival, and also have the opportunity to audition for the Robinson MS Jazz Band, which meets once a week after school.

**Who should take this course:** Anyone who has had successful experience playing a band instrument for at least a year is encouraged to participate in Intermediate Band!

**Benefits:** Music offers an exciting challenge to the student to take on responsibilities, hone problem solving skills, and strengthen their individual work ethic. Participation in band also builds team-work and social skills within a wide and diverse social circle. Music builds self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment.

**A word from the teacher:** Learning music is like learning a language, but one that is understood by everyone internationally. It is a way to express emotions and thoughts without words and when words cannot easily describe our thoughts. It is remarkable to see a group of students work together and support each other to truly become one unit as a band. Everyone brings their own strengths and talents and together something magical is created. The thrill of performing for an audience and for ourselves is in many ways unmatched by any other experience.

**Homework requirements:** Home practicing is integral to a student's success in band and regular practice is required. Home preparation is vital for successful concerts and occasional performance evaluations, as well as for continued individual improvement.

Check us out on the web at: [www.robinsontband.org](http://www.robinsontband.org) or on Facebook at **Robinson Secondary School Bands**

## Advanced Band

**Length of Course:** Year

**Prerequisites for Course:** Prior band experience and a successful audition are required.

**Course Description:** Advanced Band is made up of both 7th and 8th grade students. Students participate in band rehearsals and work on advancing instrument and ensemble techniques through method books and sheet music.

**Course Highlights:** Advanced Band performs several times during the year including two to three school concerts, the District XI Band Festival, and at an annual clinic/spring trip. Advanced Band students also have the opportunity to participate in the All-District Honor Band and the District Solo and Ensemble Festival. Also, students from Advanced Band generally make up the majority of the Jazz Band, which meets once a week after school.

**Who should take this course:** Anyone who has had successful experience playing a band instrument for at least two years is encouraged to participate in an Advanced Band.



"The reason I love band is because I love to be able to make music. It is so much fun! Also, I love band because of the amazing directors and all the cool people I get to meet. The biggest reason I love band is that we get to have a lot of fun doing things like the spring trip."

~Ryan Walther



# Chorus



**Length of Course:** Semester or Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** None  
**Course Description:** Chorus is a great opportunity for new and experienced singers to mix in a large choral environment. You may have the opportunity to sing with the high school chorus.  
**Course Highlights:** Chorus participates in several major concerts throughout the year and may have the

opportunity to be involved in the spring trip.  
**Benefits:** Students who take this class will gain confidence in singing and meet a new group of friends with a shared interest. They will have excellent preparation for the high school ensembles and a solid understanding of vocal technique, music reading, and sight-singing.  
**A word from the teacher:** Chorus is a wonderful singing experience for both 7th and 8th graders! Students will learn trust and teamwork within a musical environment.  
**Homework Requirements:** There are few homework assignments; most work is done in class.

**Who should take this course:** Any student who enjoys singing, wants to improve their voice and be a part of a fun group in the process.



# Advanced Treble Chorus



**Length of Course:** Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** Successful audition.  
**Course Description:** The Advance Treble Chorus is an intermediate chorus for 7th and 8th graders who are passionate about singing. In this class, students will learn a large variety of music as well as how to properly develop their voices. Members perform at all regular school concerts and enjoy the spring trip to Busch Gardens.

**Benefits:** Students who take this class will be prepared to be a part of the high school choral program and have a good understanding of vocal technique, musical basics and sight-singing.  
**A word from the teacher:** Members of this choir can expect an environment where student want to improve as an individual singer and as a choir. All rising 7th and 8th graders are welcome to audition, regardless of experience.  
**Homework Requirements:** There are few homework assignments; most work is done in class.

**Who should take this course:** Any one who loves to sing, wants to become a better musician and has a positive attitude.

# Guitar or Guitar 1

**Length of Course:** Semester or Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** Open to 8th graders.

**Course Description:** This course starts at the beginning . . . it is a great choice for students with little to no prior music experience or self-taught guitarists who want to refine their technique and work on note-reading skills. You will learn to play many current and classic rock tunes; learn the fundamentals of soloing and finger-style guitar, music theory and song writing.

Instruments are provided by the program, students do not need their own.

**Course Highlights:** Students will learn basic performance technique for guitar and learn both chords and classical guitar beginning styles. Students with previous guitar experience will be encouraged to expand on what they know and try new skills and music.  
**Benefits:** Students who take this course will learn basic to intermediate music literacy skills, as well as how to put those skills to use by writing their own music. You can look forward to a collaborative environment while you explore your guitar playing skills.

**Homework Requirements:** Students who stay on task during class time will likely not have any homework in this course.  
**Who should take this course:** Any student who enjoys music, wants to learn the basics of performing on guitar and wants to explore the methods behind music composition.



# Beginning Orchestra

## Primo Orchestra

**Length of Course:** Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** None  
**Course Description:** Year-long instruction on one of the four string instruments (violin, viola, cello or bass) in a small group setting.  
**Course Highlights:** The ability to quickly learn to play a string instrument and reach a performance level by December!  
**Benefits:** You will make great and lasting friendships in orchestra. On top of that, you'll have the joy of being able to perform fun and exciting music with a group of your peers.  
**A word from the teacher:** We welcome all students who would like to learn a stringed instrument to take this class. Come join in the fun!  
**Homework Requirements:** Daily practice on instrument.  
**Who should take this course:** Any 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grader may sign up. No experience required.



# Intermediate Orchestra

## String Ensemble

**Length of Course:** Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** Successful audition  
**Course Description:** Full year instruction in a string orchestra setting. String Ensemble is designed for students that have prior experience on their instrument, but are working on basic techniques, such as proper instrument position and bow hold, good intonation, and note reading.  
**Course Highlights:** Five concerts per year, including District Orchestra Assessment and a performance at Busch Gardens. Students can look forward to learning new notes and finger patterns, new bowing techniques, and shifting.  
**Benefits:** You will make great and lasting friendships in orchestra. You'll also have the joy of being able to perform fun, exciting music with a group of your peers. Get ready to make a ton of progress on your instrument, too!  
**Homework Requirements:** Daily practice on your instrument.  
**Who should take this course:** Any 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grader who has had a successful audition.



# Intermediate Orchestra

## Concert Orchestra

**Length of Course:** Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** Successful audition in which the student demonstrates a mastery of basic techniques and a readiness to learn more advanced techniques.  
**Course Description:** Full year instruction in a string orchestra setting. Concert Orchestra is designed for students who have either played their instrument since the start of the string program in 4<sup>th</sup> grade or have had quick success and a positive audition.  
**Course Highlights:** Five concerts per year, including District Orchestra Assessment and a performance at Busch Gardens. Learning new skills such as vibrato and shifting are major highlights of the year.  
**Benefits:** You will make great and lasting friendships in orchestra. You'll also have the joy of being able to perform fun, exciting music with a group of your peers. Get ready to make a ton of progress on your instrument, too!  
**Homework Requirements:** Daily practice on your instrument.  
**Who should take this course:** Any 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grader who has had a successful audition.



**Additional Orchestra Info:** In addition to having fun while learning to play an instrument, orchestra students also perform at Busch Gardens in the spring and have a great time at the park following the performance.

# Advanced Orchestra

## Sinfonietta

**Length of Course:** Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** Placement by audition only. Students must have mastered basic performance skills on an orchestral string instrument.  
**Course Description:** Sinfonietta is a performing ensemble that concentrates on advanced string techniques and preparing for performances.  
**Course Highlights:** Sinfonietta presents five concerts per year including District Orchestra Assessment and a competition at Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, in May.  
**Benefits:** Students will forge new and lasting friendships in this class and will perform great music. Sinfonietta students continue to learn advanced techniques, including shifting, tone production, advanced articulations and vibrato. Students also have the opportunity to audition for Junior District Orchestra (a one-weekend-only Honors orchestra that performs in January) and will perform for all of the 6<sup>th</sup> graders for their field trip to Robinson!  
**A word from the teacher:** The benefits of a musical education are numerous. Not only will you exercise your brain in ways you never knew possible, but you'll be doing that amongst some really great peers. Orchestra is a rich academic and social experience! Come and join the orchestra!  
**Homework Requirements:** Because this is an Advanced Level Orchestra, you are expected to practice at home to reinforce all of our classwork. You will be excited to practice the music that we perform!  
**Who should take this course:** Students who have been in their advanced strings classes in elementary school should plan to audition for Sinfonietta. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who study privately should consider performing in this Advanced Ensemble.



# Piano Lab

**Length of Course:** Semester

**Prerequisites for Course:** Open to 7th and 8th grade students.

**Course Description:** Have you always wanted to take piano lessons? Do you need more time to practice for piano lessons you already take, and want some extra help? Do you want to try playing duets or group songs with other students? Then Piano Lab is the place for you!

**Course Highlights:** Students will learn basic performance technique on piano and learn beginning to intermediate repertoire. Students with previous piano experience will be encouraged to expand on what they know and try new skills and music.

**Benefits:** Students who take this course will learn basic to intermediate music literacy skills, as well as how to

put those skills to use by writing their own music. You can look forward to a collaborative environment while you explore your piano playing skills.

**A word from the teacher:** Piano Lab is a great class to come enjoy making music in a relaxed environment. All levels are welcome. This is a great

way to supplement your piano or other performing ensemble experience.

**Homework Requirements:** Students who stay on task during class time will likely not have any homework in this course.



# Fine Arts - Visual Arts

## Art Foundations

**Length of Course:** Semester

**Prerequisites for Course:** None. Open to 7th and 8th grade students.

**Course Description:** Students in Art Foundations explore techniques and art processes such as drawing, painting, sculpture, and printmaking.



**“Creating art gives children an opportunity for self expression. In a group setting there is also the opportunity to share their work with others, practicing socialization skills and developing relationships with adults and with peers.”**  
- From Harvard’s Project Zero, on the importance of Art Education

**Course Highlights:** Projects range from painting tee shirts, to drawing people and animals, to writing comic books, to creating clay sculptures.

**Benefits:** A fun way to learn new skills. Foundations artists often explore topics studied in other classes, like endangered animals, global warming, and drawing to illustrate poems written by other students or themselves. Everyone can succeed in art!

**A word from the teacher:** We are “hands-on” and learn by doing! Come join us!

**Homework Requirements:** None

**Who should take this course:** Anyone! This elective will foster individual creativity and teach lots of hands-on art skills.

**Additional Info:** Art work is displayed throughout the school during the year. All art students will have work displayed in the Robinson Pyramid Art Show in the spring.

# Art Extensions

**Length of Course:** Semester or Year  
**Prerequisites for Course:** For the **semester class, 7th grade students** must have completed the Foundations course first, and there is no prerequisite for **8th grade students**. The **all-year** course is **only** open to 8th grade students.  
**Course Description:** This course is a continuation of learning initiated in Art Foundations and is geared toward serious artists who wish to be challenged technically and creatively. Students study art techniques and processes and create their own unique art projects.  
**Course Highlights:** Students in Art Extensions enjoy drawing people and fantasy pictures using media like charcoal and pastels. Other projects include large sculptures, book-making, and crafts like weaving, macramé and clay. More advanced painting skills in watercolor and acrylic are also introduced.  
**Benefits:** Enjoy hands-on learning that uses skills from core classes in fun ways. This is a class with no limits to what stu-

dents can learn and achieve in art.  
**A word from the teacher:**  
 Art Extensions is a good course for focused students who are *seriously committed* to learning many art skills and techniques in a fun way.  
**Homework Requirements:** Very little.  
**Who should take this course:** Students who seriously like art and are interested in continuing to learn new techniques and processes with other students who share their passion for art should consider Art Extensions.  
**Additional Info:** It's fun! All art students will have work displayed in the Robinson Pyramid Art Show in the spring. And we take field trips to museums during the year!!!!



# Computers in Art

**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders  
**Prerequisites for Course:** None

**Course Description:** Students are introduced to the use of the computer as a production tool for creating original artwork and animations. Students will learn valuable skills using the Adobe Creative Suite programs.  
**Course Highlights:** Computers in Art involves student learners in both hands on art processes as well as showing students how an art process/product translates into digital (computer) art work.  
**Benefits:** A really fun way to see how computers are changing the world of art!  
**A word from the teacher:** This course offers students an opportunity to learn about the many professional uses for computers in the world of art and design.  
**Homework Requirements:** Occasional picture taking at home with personal or school camera.  
**Who should take this course:** Anyone who likes computers and wants to learn about graphic design, cartoons, and stop motion animation.  
**Additional Info:** Students work with industry standard graphics software, including Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Windows MovieMaker. We have our own laptop lab in middle school art in addition to an art studio space. We also use graphics tablets and pens, digital cameras and scanners.



# 3-D Art Exploration

**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders  
**Prerequisites for Course:** None  
**Course Description:** 3-D Exploration Art students work in 3-D drawing skills, clay, sculpture, crafts, and architecture.  
**Course Highlights:** This is a hands-on, fast-moving, fun class making everything from 4-foot tall paper mache sculptures to designing jewelry and wearable art like tee shirts.  
**Benefits:** Uses skills from the core classes in fun ways.  
**A word from the teacher:** Intro "grads" and beginning 8th grade artists are welcome and encouraged to have some really creative fun with us! We do all kinds of 3-D art and drawing, it's never boring!  
**Who should take this course:** Students who like art and are interested in continuing to learn new sculpture techniques and processes should consider this elective.  
**Additional Info:** All art students will have work displayed in the Robinson Pyramid Art Show in the spring.



# Special Education

## Life Skills Personal Development

**Length of Course:** Year. Open to both 7th and 8th graders.

**Prerequisites for Course:** None—Enrollment in this course is determined by the IEP team.

**Course Description:** Designed to prepare students for managing life after graduation with the maximum of independent functioning. Instruction is individualized to meet the needs of the student in the areas of life skills and work skills such as managing personal care, home care, community living and interpersonal relationship skills needed for successful employment.

**Length of Course:** Year. Open to both 7th and 8th graders.

**Prerequisites for Course:** None—Enrollment in this course is determined by the IEP team.

**Course Description:** This course is designed to provide instruction to enhance personal development and interpersonal skills for students with disabilities. In addition, this course will provide social and/or emotional support in order to progress in the general education curriculum. Students who participate in the course have documented/social and/or emotional goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or have a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). The areas of instruction for this course include peer relations, self-management, academic skills, compliance skills, and assertion skills.



## Strategies for Success



**Length of Course:** Year. Open to both 7th and 8th graders.

**Prerequisites for Course:** None—Students may enroll in this course multiple years, as appropriate, per the IEP team.

**Course Description:** The elective course is designed to provide support to a student in core curricular areas and to provide direct instruction in specific learning strategies, study skills, time management, organization, and self-advocacy skills. Time is also allotted to address individual areas of need as identified in a student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). While students may receive assistance on core curricular assignments, the course is not designed to serve as a study hall. Students enrolled in the course receive the equivalent of one period of instruction each day. Students may enroll in the course multiple years as appropriate.

## Work Awareness and Transition

**Length of Course:** Year. Open to both 7th and 8th graders.

**Prerequisites for Course:** None—Enrollment in this course is determined by the IEP team.

**Course Description:** This year long course is designed to assist students as they begin to consider high school and post secondary options through career awareness and career exploration activities. Students learn and practice appropriate interpersonal/co-worker interactions, explore interest related to career options and develop work related skills through a variety of work experiences in the school environment.

# Technology Electives

## Engineering 1: Design & Modeling

**Length of Course:** Semester, open for both 7th and 8th graders.

**Prerequisites for Course:** None - but you have to take level 1 before Level 2.

**Course Description:** Engineering Design & Modeling is an educational, challenging and fun elective using hands on activities to learn about technology and engineering.

**Benefits:** The work in class correlates with SOL topics covered in math and science classes. The class benefits every student and is especially helpful to those who might pursue careers in engineering, graphic design, math or science.

**A word from the teachers:** Engineer Your Future with Technology Exploration!

**Homework Requirements:** Class time is given for all activities.

**Possible Course Highlights:**

- Students learn the physics of rocketry by building and launching a hydro-rocket.
- Program a robot to perform a set of activities and challenges using Lego NXT Mindstorms.
- Using modeling software, students design and test their model bridges to determine the efficiency of their structure.
- Students learn about hydraulic and pneumatic systems by making a robotic arm which moves in three directions.
- The semester ends with students making a model dragster propelled by a CO2 cartridge which moves their car down a 50 foot track at a speed of over 40 mph!



Students enjoy racing the dragsters they created down a 50 foot track.



## Engineering 2: Simulation & Fabrication

**Length of Course:** Semester, open for both 7th and 8th graders.

**Prerequisites for Course:** Engineering Design & Modeling Level 1

**Course Description:** Engineering Simulations & Fabrications is an educational, challenging and fun elective using hands on activities to learn about technology and engineering.

**Benefits:** The work in class correlates with SOL topics covered in math and science classes. The class benefits every student and is especially helpful to those who might pursue careers in engineering, graphic design, math or science.

**A word from the teachers:** Engineer Your Future with Technology Exploration!

**Homework Requirements:** Class time is given for all activities.

**Possible Course Highlights:**

- Students use and explore cutting edge technologies such as laser engraving, sublimation and 3D printing!
- Students construct and launch a solid fuel rocket and develop their understanding of the physics and mathematics of rocketry.
- Design your own chocolate bar starting with computer aided drawing. The CADD designs will be 3D printed and then vacuum formed to create a mold. Yummy!
- Students will learn the basics of electronics. Students will build solderless circuits and solder a printed circuit board.
- Students design and construct a muscle car.

# Engineering 3: Advanced Design & Prototyping

**Length of Course:** Semester, open to 8th graders only

**Prerequisites for Course:** Engineering level 1 and Engineering level 2 must be completed prior to taking Level 3.

**Course Description:** Through hands-on active engagement and collaboration, students will develop and apply creative and critical thinking skills to design, document, and showcase prototypes and solutions that solve real world problems in areas that include environmental sustainability and other technology/engineering topics.

**Benefits:** This course allows for more student driven solutions to provided design challenges. Students will explore and apply their own passions and creativity in design and engineering. Critical thinking and problem solving are at the heart of this course.

**A word from the teachers:** Showcase your Genius!

**Homework Requirement:** Class time is given for all activities.

**Possible Course Highlights:** Laser engraving, CNC routing, and 3D printing are used to design and create student generated designs and solutions to challenges. Robotics and open-source electronics platform may be incorporated.



# World Languages



Students have the opportunity to take Intro to Foreign Language (IFL), to be exposed to languages before selecting a high school credit-bearing language course. Students may earn up to 5 credits of World Language after taking IFL. By starting a World Language, or being exposed to languages in middle school, students have the ability to further their language career and aim toward fluency in high school. Students can choose IFL in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and still pursue the IB Diploma.

Students may also choose to earn 6 credits of World Language before they graduate from Robinson. Seventh grade students may enroll in any of the five languages offered at Robinson (French, German, Latin and Spanish). Students may complete level 1 in 7<sup>th</sup> grade or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Successful completion of level 1 awards students one year of a World Language high school credit.

The workload of a World Languages class is rigorous, like other high school courses.

- Students will have nightly homework (of about 15-20 minutes a night).
- Students will have projects that must be completed at home.
- They will need to memorize vocabulary and study for tests in addition to the nightly homework assignments.
- They will be required to keep their materials organized.

# Introduction to Foreign Language



**Length of Course:** Semester—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Course Description:** students will explore the study of languages offered at Robinson. This includes French, German, Latin, and Spanish.

**Course Highlights:** Emphasis is on providing students the foundations and connections of languages of the world, basic interpersonal communication skills, and cross-cultural perspectives of the speakers of each language and where they live.

**Benefits:** The overarching goal is to provide students opportunities to explore languages prior to selecting one language to formally study for high school credit.

**A word from the teacher:** Students will "travel" to different corners of the world and learn how to be positive global ambassadors of their schools and understand how language study enhances their English skills, reinforces interdisciplinary knowledge, and sets the foundation for them to be life-long learners of languages. Students will engage in many cultural activities and experiences.

**Homework Requirements:** minimal

## French I

**Length of Course:** Year—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Course Description:**

*Bienvenue!* French I introduces students to the cultures of a variety of French-speaking countries in Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Students work on reading, writing, comprehension, and speaking skills. The class includes hands-on activities such as games, projects, and music.

**Course Highlights:** Students create their own cafés, writing skits and creating the food, atmosphere, menus, and even costumes for the occasion. We use music as an enjoyable way to help learn the language.

**Benefits:** French is one of the world's most beautiful languages, and it is spoken on five continents, so it's a useful language. Knowledge of French culture is important to anyone's understanding of world culture. Learning about and tasting delicious French food is fun!

**A word from the teacher:** Much of our English vocabulary



Decorating cookies at French Club.

comes directly from the French language, so there are many words that are familiar to English speakers.

**Homework Requirements:** World Languages classes require about the same amount of work as core classes.

**Who should take this course:** Everyone! Do you want to save the world? French is spoken in many developing countries in Africa. Do you want to travel or study in Europe or Québec? French is useful there as well. Do you want to order delicious French food? You'll learn how in French 1.

**Additional info:** Robinson has a well-established exchange program with a school in Provence, France. French Club and French Honor Society offer many enjoyable activities.



Enjoying French Club activities

## German I

**Length of Course:** Year—Open to 7th and 8th graders

**Course Description:** Willkommen to German!! You are about to embark on a journey with Mozart, Einstein, Nowitzki and others from the world of music, science, sports, and the arts! Learning German language and culture will be a rewarding and fun experience for you. German and English are both Germanic languages, which means they have many similarities, making German relatively easy to learn.

**Course Highlights:** Not only do we prepare you to speak, read and write in the German language, we also prepare you for travel to Germany, Austria and Switzerland, all beautiful and culturally interesting regions!

**Benefits:** Have you ever heard of BMW? Volkswagen? Porsche? Do you like Nestle Crunch? Do you shop at ALDI?



German Exchange students come from Dortmund, Germany each October for two weeks.

These companies are from German speaking countries and they need people who speak both German and English to work for them.

**A word from the teacher:** German is an academic elective in the world language department. Students must remember that this class will go on their high school transcript. Yes, it is fun, but daily completion of homework is necessary in order to achieve success in this class.

**Homework Requirements:** About 10-20 minutes per class meeting, not including studying for tests.

**Who should take this course:** Everyone! German is fun, the food is great, and the teachers are passionate about the language.

**Additional Info:** German Club offers fun after-school activities and Robinson also has a partner school in Germany. Every year the students visit us, and we travel to Germany to visit them.

# Latin I

**Length of Course:** Year—Open to **7th and 8th graders**

**Course Description:** Salvete to Latin I! You are about to join the company of Caesar, Horace, American presidents, Albert Einstein, and many more who have studied Latin. Learning the Latin language and culture will be a rewarding experience for you. *Carpe diem* (seize the day)!

**Course Highlights:** In addition to studying the language, students will learn about the history, culture, mythology, daily life, art, and architecture, and study Roman influences in Western Civilization.

**Benefits:** Latin helps everyone learn the more difficult vocabulary words needed for academic courses in high school and college. Latin is particularly helpful for students whose native language is not English.

**A word from the teacher:** Latin is ancient and modern. Spoken by Romans 2000 years ago, today, it forms the basis for more than 60% of English vocabulary. The study of Latin can enhance your ability to read and write in English, broaden your perspective of Western culture, and introduce you to vocabulary used in the fields of medicine, law, literature, science, and technology.

**Homework Requirements:** About 20 minutes per class meeting.



# Spanish I

**Length of Course:** Year—Open to **7th and 8th graders**

**Course Description:** The course is designed for the student who is willing and ready to meet new people and develop friendships with the fastest growing population in the United States. The primary goals of the Spanish program are to ensure that students:

- Communicate in Spanish in the major language arts skills: speaking, reading, writing, listening, and comprehension.
- Gain knowledge and understanding of the Spanish language cultures.
- Develop insight into the nature of the Spanish language and culture.
- Participate in multicultural communities at home and around the world (Fairfax County Program of Studies, 2004).

**Course Highlights:** One of the most exciting features about learning Spanish is how quickly the learner is able to use the language in most aspects of everyday life.

**Benefits:** There are many benefits to enrolling in Spanish I, but the most enriching one is the advantage of completing five years of Spanish language study before leaving high school!

**A word from the teacher:** Learning Spanish is fun and practical. And, learning Spanish requires practice and motivation!

**Homework Requirements:** Homework is assigned regularly. Online practice is recommended for its many benefits.

**Who should take this course:** This course is for anyone and everyone ready to communicate in Spanish from day one!

**IMPORTANT:** Students who **speak Spanish in their home** but have **not** had formal classes in Spanish language should sign up for **Spanish for Fluent Speakers 1, not the regular Spanish 1 class!**

## Notes



# ROBINSON

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## SECONDARY SCHOOL

