



Engaging the mind. Engaging the world.

Curriculum Guide
2009-2010

Desert Academy

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Desert Academy's Vision

Mission Statement

Desert Academy is dedicated to academic and personal excellence. We provide a quality college preparatory education in a diverse school community that values individuality and character, promotes self confidence, and fosters global understanding.

Educational Philosophy

Desert Academy's emphasis on concurrent study of humanities, science, mathematics, physical education, and the arts provides continuity of scholarship and cultivates critical thinking skills. Through experiential learning, discussion, investigation, independent research, and writing across the curriculum, students gain competence that will sustain a lifetime of learning. Students are encouraged to acknowledge their responsibility to themselves, their classmates, and the global community. Learning at Desert is not a means to an end, but rather, a bridge to further engagement with the world at large, and as a result, a more meaningful, thoughtful life.

Diversity Statement

Desert Academy is a diverse community with a conviction that successful education develops basic human values such as respect and integrity. Our academic curriculum, advisory program, and school activities foster tolerance for difference in gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic group, religion and sexual orientation.

We affirm that varying perspectives enrich the life of our school community and the world around us.

Department Mission Statements

English

The Desert Academy English Department stimulates thoughtful, passionate communication about significant literary and cultural texts. We encourage students to view reading, writing, and discussion as processes of exploration resulting in further engagement with the world at large. To this end, our methodology stresses the writing process, including outlining, drafting, revision, thereby defining writing as a mode of thought.

Social Studies

Desert Academy's Social Studies Department seeks to promote a deep appreciation for and understanding of the events, ideas, and forces that shape our modern world. Students practice the skills to interpret and assess the world from geographic, historic, political, social, and economic perspectives.

World Languages

The Desert Academy World Languages Department engages students in the discovery of “the other” through the exploration of language and culture. We see students’ innate curiosity as a doorway to understanding. Students will question and reflect, thereby connecting their individual experiences to the collective. We empower students to expand their worldviews in the context of the “global community”.

Mathematics

The Desert Academy Mathematics Department provides students with a strong foundation in the structure of mathematics as well as encourages mathematical exploration. A variety of problem-solving activities, interactive investigations, and daily lessons motivate and challenge each student according to his or her individual needs.

Science

The Desert Academy Science Department engages students physically and mentally in an inquiry-based program. Science literacy is accomplished by providing students with opportunities to expand, enhance, and modify the ways in which they view the world. Students are empowered to express points of view, solve problems, and make decisions based on evidence. An environment which encourages students’ thinking, honesty, curiosity, and questioning produces students who are lifelong learners and scientifically literate.

Arts

The Desert Academy Arts Department is dedicated to the artistic growth and creative development of each student. Through exposure to theatre, music, art, and film, we strive to prepare students for college-level art studies as well as encourage appreciation of the role of the arts in society. Our multicultural approach encourages all students to try new things, create, and problem-solve.

Digital Media Arts Program

D-MAP courses at Desert Academy guide students along critical technology learning pathways designed to provide enhanced opportunities in higher education and in career pathways across all segments of modern industry and society. Through learning to

develop animated computer graphics, interactive computer programs and web applications, and simulations and games, students are enabled to further hone their skills into broader applications in science, math, language arts, social sciences, finance, entertainment, and the arts.

Physical Education

The Desert Academy Physical Education Department provides students with the opportunity to gain body awareness while developing the skills needed to engage in an active and healthy lifestyle, thereby providing opportunities for enjoyment, challenges, self-expression, and social interaction.

Athletics

The Desert Academy Athletics Department provides an environment in which students can experience success, strive for excellence, practice the qualities of leadership and sportsmanship, and have fun while participating.

Middle School Curriculum

Desert Academy's Middle School curriculum recognizes the importance of these unique years with a program designed particularly for this stage of development. Indeed, the main goal of the Middle School program is to give students the tools necessary for success in Middle School, High School, and beyond. Study skills like outlining, note-taking, and active reading strategies are taught explicitly in all academic subjects as well as in a nine-week intensive study skills course. All students are provided with a planner to record assignments and manage time; teachers check this planner regularly to ensure accuracy and completion. Goal-setting, organizational skills, and taking responsibility for one's own learning are stressed through cross-curricular reinforcement. The challenging curriculum is based on a liberal arts philosophy that embraces the study of the humanities, math and science, and the arts as the path to a balanced, rewarding education. Across the curriculum, students spend their days studying subjects that teach them to analyze, reason, question, and seek synthesis. **All Middle School students are required to use an academic planner provided by the school.**

English/ Language Arts

Students in Desert's Middle School English program experience the major genres of literature as readers, writers, and sometimes performers in an effort to encourage their understanding of the gamut of literary tradition. Students are introduced to the concept of a "text" as it relates not only to literature, but also to visual and object based communication. The writing process, including outlining, drafting, and revision, is given precedence over a final product; thereby defining writing as a mode of thought. Emphasis is placed on using the conventions and vocabulary of English usage and grammar to articulate one's meaning. Most importantly, we hope that students leave Middle School loving to read, confident in their ability to write, and stimulated by passionate and respectful classroom discussion.

Required Courses:

Class VII English: Coming of Age

Class VIII English: An Investigation into Human Nature

Social Studies

Desert's Middle School Social Studies program is designed to introduce students to a broad survey of the study of humanity. Beginning in Class Seven, students consider World Geography with an emphasis on the way geography affects a society's culture and customs. They also study New Mexico History, Geography, and Culture. The Class Eight Social Studies curriculum focuses on American culture. Students study Civics, asking the question, "What is it to be an American Citizen?". Students also have the opportunity for cultural study in the Core Knowledge course, investigating the myriad of historical and contemporary elements that make up the American culture.

Required Courses:

Class VII Geography

Class VIII American Social Studies

Foreign Language

At Desert Academy, language is a framework that facilitates access to culture. Learning a foreign language is more than verb conjugation and sentence construction; it is a tool to

explore the art, culture, and mode of thinking of the people whose language is studied. Consequently, we view the opportunity to learn a foreign language not only as a way to communicate, but more broadly, as a way to see things from another point of view.

In Class Seven, students embark on a World Language Rotation that allows for exposure to four different languages and cultures: Latin, Spanish, French, and Chinese. Through this rotation, students are asked to “see differently” by immersing themselves in a foreign culture. The end result is not only new knowledge about the way other cultures work, but a fresh outlook on our American culture as well.

Students begin their language study in Grade Eight with Spanish, French or Chinese.

Required Courses:

World Language Rotation

Spanish I

French I

OR

Chinese I

Mathematics

Middle School marks the beginning of formal study of abstract mathematics.

Pre-Algebra, in particular, is fundamental and success therein provides foundation for future progress in mathematical study. The math curriculum strives to improve critical thinking and analytical skills as students discover how to use math concepts in their everyday lives.

Required Courses:

2 years of mathematics, which may include: Middle School Mathematics, Pre-Algebra, or Algebra I, Geometry (for high school credit)

Science

The seventh and eighth grade science courses are an integrated spiral of curricular topics from biology, chemistry, physics, and earth science. Frequent field trips and hands on experimentation are fundamental to both courses.

Required Courses:

Integrated Science 7

Integrated Science 8

Technology

Class Seven: Computing Essentials

Students receive formal grounding in basic computing skills and knowledge including typing proficiency, use of standard office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), web content development and publication, introductions to computer graphics, animation, and programming, and computer disassembly and repair.

Class Eight: Computing Essentials II

This course builds on the skills covered in Computing Essentials I.

Middle School Elective Rotation

The Elective Rotation courses are designed to expose students to as many different electives as possible. Students rotate through the four segments, experiencing a different elective each quarter. The overriding goal of this course is to allow students to explore their multiple intelligences, thereby discovering new talents or conquering old misconceptions or fears. In addition, students leave middle school well rounded and better prepared to excel in High School and beyond.

Class Seven

The Elective Rotation begins in seventh grade with a look at the historical context of art's place in society. Students rotate through the four segments, experiencing a different elective each quarter. The seventh grade rotation also includes a segment on study and life- skills, a necessary component of a successful education at Desert Academy and in the world at large.

Segment 1: Study and Life Skills

The study and life skills segment is an integral part of building the foundation for success at Desert Academy. Completed during the first semester, this 9-week course prepares students for the demands of middle school and beyond by stressing organization, note-taking, and effective reading strategies. In addition, students will study essential health and wellness topics such as their changing bodies, making good choices, and fostering healthy relationships.

Segment 2: Speech

Students learn the basic techniques for public speaking: projection, articulation and proper breathing. They write and perform impromptu, persuasive, introductory and after dinner speeches. They also work on poetry interpretation and are introduced to debate.

Segment 3: Music Appreciation

7th Grade Fine Arts Rotation in Music focuses on basic music theory, including keyboard theory (aka piano "lessons"); music history from the Medieval period through Popular and 20th Century music; beginning vocal technique; basic movement in dance with music from the Renaissance; as well as music appreciation. Students will share the music they listen to with the class and work on art projects related to the sound of music.

Segment 4: Art History

The Art History segment exposes students to the different roles that visual art played throughout history. Students begin by examining the role of art in ancient cultures such as ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and Native American societies. They then move through

the historical periods with a focus on the purpose and goal of art in each society studied. Students have the opportunity to create imitative works throughout the course.

Class Eight

Segment 1: Art Appreciation

The Art Appreciation segment exposes students to contemporary art, using the vibrant art community of Santa Fe as its main text. Field trips to local art venues are supplemented by in-class multimedia presentations and visiting artist talks designed to introduce the spectrum of contemporary art. Assignments include imitative artworks, art critiques, and a research essay on a particular contemporary art movement of the student's choice.

Segment 2: Music Performance

8th Grade Fine Arts Rotation in Music focuses on the musical aspect of theatre. Students learn vocal technique and basic stage movement while working on choruses or solos from "classical" to contemporary Broadway shows.

Segment 3: Introduction to Theater and Film

The students learn the basics of improvisation and work on theater and/or musical comedy scenes. They perform these at a school event. They also view and discuss some film classics.

Segment 4: Class Eight Project

The culminating project of the middle school years, the Class Eight Project is an opportunity for students to deeply investigate a topic or problem that they feel strongly about. Students complete a research essay, a digital media project, and a presentation based on this topic. Successful completion of the eighth grade project is necessary to graduate from the middle school.

High School Curriculum

English/ Language Arts

The High School English program builds on the literary skills and language mechanics of Middle School English. More literature is read, writing mechanics and reading comprehension are emphasized. Students demonstrate textual understanding through writing, discussion and presentations. Students are exposed to a broad spectrum of genres and styles.

Required Courses:

English 9: Cultural Building Blocks/Writing Building Blocks

English 10: Self and Society

English 11: Regional Study and Theme

English 12: Genre Study

History/ Social Studies

High School Social Studies develops and deepens the historical concepts introduced in Middle School social studies. Historical facts and interpretations are explored using textbooks and original sources (oral, written, artifact or art). Geographical and cultural knowledge is expanded through additional map work.

Courses (4 credits required):

US History I

US History II

World History I

World History II

Global Studies

IB History of Europe

IB Psychology

Mathematics

High school mathematics courses are sequential and cumulative, requiring the mastery of one level before proceeding to the next. All high school mathematics courses integrate geometric, algebraic and other mathematical concepts, but the integration does not come at the expense of the cumulative nature of the subject.

Courses (3 required, 4 recommended):

Algebra I

Geometry

Algebra II

Trigonometry

Pre-Calculus

Calculus

IB Math Studies

IB Mathematics Standard Level

Science

High School Science builds upon the basic skills and vocabulary learned in Middle School Science. More scientific and mathematical rigor is demanded as the scientific fields are delineated and sharpened. Both theoretical and experimental approaches to

scientific inquiry are explored. Students continue to work both individually and collaboratively with each class.

Courses: (3 required)

Ninth Grade Science (Biology and Physical Science)

Chemistry

General Physics

General Biology

IB Biology

IB Physics

Foreign Language

Building on the interest and skills developed in the Middle School Foreign Language program, students tackle the general requirements as listed in the Middle School overview, but work more intensively to develop their abilities to speak, read, understand and write in a language other than English. Students study the relationship between language and culture, and can prepare for achievement tests in their chosen language if they so desire. Each class depends upon mastery of skills in the preceding level.

Courses (3 credits in the same language required):

Spanish

French

Chinese

Physical Education

The Physical Education program at Desert Academy promotes self-confidence and competence. The goal of the program is high participation. The classes are designed to be fun, active and to teach skills in sports that students will participate in long after their secondary education.

PE class offerings include: bowling, swimming, golf, softball, football, soccer, basketball, kickball, wrestling, floor hockey, self-defense, weight training and tennis.

Fine Arts: (2 courses required)

Creative Writing/Journalism

Students in this workshop course have the opportunity to write short fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. A literary journal showcasing the students' work is published once per semester.

High School Art

Topics in design, drawing, painting, and sculpture are explored. The emphasis of this course is a general overview of art disciplines and techniques. Students have the opportunity to show their work in a school art show.

High School Art II (prerequisite: High School Art I)

A more in-depth study of the topics introduced in high school art I.

High School Art III (prerequisite: High School Art II and/or teacher permission) and Visual Arts IB

An upper-level art course that leads to the development of a portfolio and work for an art

show. Students study art history and theory in addition to creative processes.

Photography

This course covers camera techniques, film exposure, development, composition, and black and white printing. Students have the opportunity to show their photographs in a school art show.

Theatre

Theatre I is an exploration of the basic principles of dynamic acting. In addition, theatre history and writing for theatre are addressed. This course allows students opportunities to perform in front of an audience.

Theatre Arts IB

The IB Theatre program seeks to develop theatre practitioners who are well versed in all aspects of theatre including history, writing, production, and performance. This course of study promotes both individual and team work as the participants gain an understanding of self and learn to express creative ideas with confidence. Students explore and research significant periods in theatre history and undertake critical analysis of plays and performances from these periods. Development of their own theatre pieces representing certain styles and periods will personalize their studies.

Comedy Improv

Comedy Improv teaches students to use improvisation to produce well-developed skits. Students participate in a number of improvisation games as a way to develop strong, comedic characters. This course allows students opportunities to perform in front of an audience.

High School Music

High School Choral Ensemble focuses on choral literature from the Renaissance through Popular music. Students learn pitch-matching, breath support, note-reading, basic music theory and vocal technique. The ensemble will perform twice during the school year in an evening concert or event. There is no pre-requisite required for this elective class other than a love of music and a desire to sing with a fabulous group of high school students.

Digital Media Arts Program

Computer Graphics I

Students learn the fundamentals of two-dimensional (2D) computer graphics and digital imaging. Primary focus is given to the use of Adobe Photoshop and Corel Painter as imaging and painting tools, used together with scanners and graphics tablets. Students explore the range of applications for computer graphics with special emphasis on print and web graphics projects, ending the year with the Class Eight Project and a digital portfolio to showcase their work.

Computer Graphics II: Introduction to 3D Modeling and Animation

Students dive into the realm of digital animation and the computer as a tool for creating motion arts. The class employs a variety of 2D and 3D animation tools to allow a rich exploration of animation, as well as screenings of several animation formats, cultures, and styles. Coursework includes flip books, stop motion (or "claymation"), animated GIFs, rotoscoping, and a second semester introduction to 3D modeling and character animation.

Computer Graphics III: 3D Animation Projects

Prerequisites: Computer Graphics II: Introduction to Computer Animation (or equivalent animation course/experience, by approval of Technology Director)

Students elaborate on the possibilities of digital 3D animation, honing skills learned in Computer Graphics II. This course will focus on character development and storytelling, with advanced modeling and animation exercises. The class will culminate in a second semester class project, allowing each student to function as a part of a working production team and screen their work at local festivals.

Advanced Computing Concepts

This course covers real-world integration of computer programming and web design. We touch on elements such as advanced podcasting, proper use of multimedia, web marketing, Web 2.0, understanding your audience, and planning a web campaign.

Film Production (in conjunction with the Arts Department)

This course educates students in the history of film, focusing on the techniques of effective film-making. The majority of the course will be devoted to film production, allowing each student to make his/her own digital film.

Desert Academy Graduation Requirements

In order to graduate from Desert Academy, a minimum of 29 credits is required.

English	4 credits
History/Social Studies	4 credits
Mathematics	3 credits
<i>(we strongly recommend 4 credits)</i>	
Science	3 credits <i>(2 labs)</i>
Foreign Language	3 credits <i>(same language)</i>
Physical Education	1 credit
Senior Project	1 credit
Fine Arts	2 credits
Electives	7 credits
CAS	3 credits

New students enrolling in Desert Academy's high school will begin their CAS requirements at their current grade level. (see CAS guide for more details)

Every student must take a minimum of **four academic courses** each school year, regardless of whether or not they have fulfilled their graduation credit requirements.

Concurrent enrollment at various accredited institutions for extra credit, make-up work, or college credit is offered (at an additional cost) with the approval of the student's advisor, teacher, Assistant Head of School, and parents.

Middle School Required Curriculum

English: 2 years

Social Studies: 2 years

Science: 2 years

Math: 2 years

Foreign Language: 2 years

Fine Arts: 2 years

Technology: 2 years

Physical Education: 2 years

CAS: 2 years (see CAS guide)

Class Eight Project

*Middle School students may earn high school credit by enrolling in high school level courses in math or foreign language

**Students entering Desert Academy in the eighth grade are not required to make up credits if their seventh grade program differs from Desert's requirements.

International Baccalaureate Programme

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at Desert Academy provides students with the opportunity to participate in a challenging, internationally recognized curriculum based in a mission and educational philosophy that mirrors Desert's own commitment to valuing the individual, teaching the whole student, and privileging inquiry and process over absolutes and products.

Who can participate in the IB Diploma Programme?

The Diploma Programme is designed for juniors and seniors in high school.

There are two different levels of participation in the Diploma Programme at Desert. Full Diploma students are students who have chosen to participate in the full Diploma Programme which consists of taking classes in each of six prescribed subject areas as well as taking the Theory of Knowledge course, completing CAS requirements, and completing the Extended Essay (please see the IB Guide for more information on the structure and content of the IB Diploma Programme). Full Diploma students will be given priority in filling IB classes. Certificate students are students who have chosen to take between one and several IB courses, but not to participate in the full Diploma Programme. At the end of each IB course, certificate students will take the IB exam and receive a certificate for that subject area from IB in addition to the credit received for taking the class here at Desert.

How does a student apply to become a full diploma candidate?

There are two components of this process: a statement of intent and the mutual interview.

Statement of Intent – In the winter of their sophomore year, students wishing to join the Diploma Programme write a one page statement of intent. This statement should answer the question “why do you want to be a part of the IB Diploma Programme?” Students are encouraged to be honest and creative in their responses. The purpose of this statement is both to give us a written account of the students’ intent and motivation, and to give the students the opportunity to reflect on paper about their readiness to meet the challenges of the programme.

The Mutual Interview – The mutual interview is designed to give students a chance to ask questions about the Diploma Programme and have their concerns addressed, as well as to give the school a chance to get a deeper sense of the student’s readiness and motivation. Students schedule their interviews as soon as they submit their Letter of Intent.

Prerequisites

In order to be considered for the full Diploma Programme, students must have completed Algebra II and three years of a foreign language (with the exception of Chinese) by the beginning of their junior year.

It is highly recommended that students intending to pursue the full Diploma Programme take honors level classes during their 9th and 10th grade years.

Students with below a 3.0 GPA who are interested in entering the Diploma Programme are required to raise their GPA by 0.5 or up to a 3.0 (whichever is closer) before they can participate. While in the Diploma Programme, students are required to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA. If a student's GPA drops below 3.0 during the course of the programme, the student's candidacy will be reconsidered.

IB Diploma Programme Coordinator

The IB Diploma Programme Coordinator acts as a resource for the students, families, and faculty in navigating the requirements, deadlines and services of the programme. The Diploma Programme Coordinator also acts as a liaison between the International Baccalaureate Organization and the students, families, and faculty at Desert Academy.