



Pershing Middle School

Electives Course Descriptions

2023-2024

General Electives

Note: Electives may require additional supplies and/or fees. Band, orchestra, and guitar all require the purchase or rental of an instrument. Elective courses are subject to change.

Art (6th – 8th grade) Students will have the opportunity to learn, recognize, and understand the elements and principles of art, improve their observational and creative skills, and experience a wide variety of art techniques from drawing, painting, and printmaking/sculpting.

Band (6th – 8th grade) For students interested in learning to play an instrument, including Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, Trumpet, French Horn, Trombone, Euphonium, Tuba, and Percussion. No experience necessary! Audition is recommended for experienced students.

Choir (6th – 8th grade) Students will learn sight reading skills and overall understanding of music theory. All Chorus members will take a sight-reading test at the end of each semester. Students will also participate in a variety of concerts and performances.

Creative Writing (6th – 8th grade) Students will explore writing by learning to create imaginatively constructed fiction and poetry. They will also read and critique fiction and poetry by published writers.

Dance (6th – 8th grade) This class focuses on introductory/beginner level movement in each of various dance techniques. Basic dance vocabulary, performance skills, choreography, improvisation, dance history, and performance appreciation skills are introduced.

French (7th grade) This is the introductory course to the French language and culture. Primary emphasis is given to the development of basic skills in listening and speaking. Students are given reading, speaking, and writing practice. This course is required to take French 8 for high school credit.

Guitar (6th – 8th grade) This course offers foundation instruction in classical guitar technique. Fundamentals include correct posture and playing position with attention to right-and left-hand technique. In addition, students will learn how to read standard music notation. No experience necessary for beginners. Students must have a nylon stringed guitar and accessories (footstool, electronic tuner, and music stand) at home. Instruments for use in the classroom are provided.

Gymnastics (6th – 8th grade) This class is designed to build skills through progression. Activities include bars, tumbling, vault and balancebeam.

Latin (6th – 8th grade) This is the introductory course to the Latin language and culture of ancient Rome. Students will learn to master the basic grammatical principles of Latin, acquire both a Latin vocabulary and an expanded English vocabulary, and develop an awareness that the history, mythology, and English language of Western culture have classical origins.

Martial Arts (6th – 8th grade) This course is offered to any student interested in joining Kickstart Kids karate classes for the first time. In this course, students will begin their training in the martial arts. All students will be responsible for the annual equipment fee of \$50 which includes their uniform (financial assistance is available, so please do not let the fee cause you to not select this class). For more information about the class, please watch this short video: <https://youtu.be/SqQioG7YNxI>

Odyssey of the Mind (6th – 8th grade) This course teaches students how to develop and use their natural creativity to become problem-solvers. Students are faced with a problem that requires an original solution and the use of skills that will be beneficial in future classes. Odyssey of the Mind emphasizes teamwork, budgeting, time management, public speaking, and so much more.

Orchestra (6th – 8th grade) This course offers instruction on string instruments. Fundamentals include proper posture, playing position and training in music literacy.

PALS (Leadership Team) (8th grade only) Students in PALS can work as peer helpers at Pershing and at the elementary schools and are involved in creating and participating in service projects. To apply for the PALS class, students must contact Ms. Harrison at dharr20@houstonisd.org

Piano (6th – 8th grade) This is an entry level piano class made up of players with the equivalent of zero to one year of playing or music instruction experience.

Spanish (7th grade) This is an introductory course into the Spanish language and culture. Primary emphasis is given to development of basic skills in listening and speaking. Students are given reading, speaking, and writing practice. This course is required to take Spanish 8 for high school credit.

STEAM Projects and Enrichment (6th grade only) The goal of this class is to foster a learning environment in which students are challenged to produce original ideas, objects and structures using concepts and skills. This interdisciplinary (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) course is designed to engage and challenge students through hands-on collaborative Project Based Learning (PBL).

Technology Applications/Graphic Design (6th – 8th grade) This course is designed to teach students how to productively use software and the internet. Students learn fundamental concepts and key application skills for using Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point, Publisher as well as related social and ethical issues. Students will also learn about proper Internet etiquette. Students learn to define digital art and design. They will learn to distinguish between digital art and design and other art forms while identifying the traits of digital arts. Students will also create examples of graphic art.

Theatre (6th – 8th grade) The student will learn theatre terminology and basic acting techniques of characterization and memorization. Other subjects covered are improvisation, play analysis and design. Students are required to perform monologues and duo scenes in front of the class. After completing a beginning class, the student is eligible to audition for an advanced class.

Yearbook (7th – 8th grade) Students learn the basic principles of yearbook production and develop skills that include writing copy, captions, and headlines; digital photography; desktop publishing; and using appropriate technology tools for media production. To apply, students need to obtain a recommendation from their current ELA teacher and apply to the yearbook adviser via email.

8th Grade ONLY High School Credit Courses

The list below are classes that will earn students a High School Credit. Some are open to any 7th & 8th grade student, and some have specific requirements or ways to qualify. Please read carefully and make sure the criteria are met to take the class you select. Traditionally these classes can carry a heavier workload than general middle school classes.

Art 1A/1B (8th Grade) Successful completion of two years of Art at Pershing are prerequisites for this class. Students will continue to develop and create art that demonstrates strong observational skills, reflection, problem solving using a variety of art media, expanding their understanding of the elements and principles of art, application of techniques and art processes, in depth understanding of art history, and analyzing and evaluating visual artworks. Artworks created in this class will produce a strong portfolio for future high school auditions.

Broadcast Journalism (8th Grade – Spring Semester) Discover the thrilling world of Broadcast Journalism in this dynamic, semester-long course designed for 8th-grade students. Learn to research, write, and present compelling news stories while operating cameras, microphones, and editing software. Engage in hands-on workshops, collaborate with peers, and hear from industry professionals. By the end of the course, you'll have a portfolio of work to showcase your skills, earn 0.5 high school credits, and be well-prepared for a future in media and journalism. Don't miss this chance to enter the spotlight and bring impactful stories to life! **This is a semester class paired with Speech. You may only select either Broadcast Journalism or Photojournalism, but not both.**

French 1A/1B (8th Grade) Successful completion of 7th grade French is a pre-requisite for this course. Students will learn grammar, pronunciation, and sentence structure as it applies to the French language. Students will develop the four communicative skills in French: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.

Photojournalism (8th Grade – Fall Semester) Experience the captivating world of Photojournalism in this immersive, semester-long course tailored for 8th-grade students. Master the art of visual storytelling through a camera lens, learning composition, lighting, and editing techniques to create powerful images. Participate in practical workshops, collaborate with classmates, and receive guidance from industry experts. By the end of the course, you'll have a stunning portfolio showcasing your talents, earn 0.5 high school credits, and be well-equipped for a future in media and visual journalism. Seize this opportunity to capture the world around you and share stories that resonate! **This is a semester class paired with Speech. You may only select either Broadcast Journalism or Photojournalism, but not both.**

Principles of Applied Engineering (8th Grade) This course focuses on various forms of engineering and computer programming. Several of the projects that students will complete include balsawood bridges, mousetrap cars, water rockets, and online game creations. Students will also learn to write and debug computer code using JavaScript.

Principles of Information Technology (8th Grade) Learn computer literacy skills ranging from word processing to presentation software, and enhance reading, writing, computing, communication, and reasoning skills and apply them to the information technology environment.

Spanish 1A/1B (8th Grade) Successful completion of 7th grade Spanish is a pre-requisite for this course. Students will learn grammar, pronunciation, and sentence structure as it applies to the Spanish language. Students will develop the four communicative skills: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing.

Speech (8th Grade - Semester Course) Speech Communications will help students better interact with others. They will use different forms of communication, both verbal and nonverbal. Students will learn to speak effectively in front of an audience, or as part of a group, and listen effectively in both formal and informal situations. **This is a semester class paired with Journalism.**

Theatre 1A/1B (8th Grade) See course description for Theatre Production – Advanced Theatre and Technical Theatre Production. To be eligible for high school credit, students must be in the 8th grade, have completed Theatre I and Theatre II, and participated in one main stage production.

Advanced/Audition Based Electives

The list below includes areas in which advanced courses are offered. If you are interested, please contact the teacher directly for an audition. Experience is required and there may be an additional fee (uniform, supplies, etc.).

Advanced Art II (7th – 8th Grade)

Teacher: Perugini, Stephanie L - SPERUGIN@houstonisd.org; DeHoyos, Margo - margo.dehoyos@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Art I and Audition/Teacher Approval

Students will build on the skills already learned from the previous year, including expanding their understanding of the Elements and Principles of Art, their draftsmanship, and study of art history. Students will have opportunities to create more advanced art projects based on their observation and imagination skills.

Advanced Gymnastics (7th - 8th grade)

Teacher: Henry, Leslie – lhenry3@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

Students are placed in this class based on their audition and average skill level on all apparatus. Advanced girls are required to have prior training on the balance beam, uneven bars, vault, and floor. Advanced boys are required to have prior training on the floor, vault, pommel horse, parallel bars, high bar, and still rings. Students in this class will participate in 2-3 campus performances each year.

Advanced Piano (6th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Torres Chibras, Armando R - ATORRE17@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

This class is a performance class rather than a piano lab. Students in this class are advanced piano players, capable of playing works by Chopin, Debussy, and Beethoven. Students who are selected for this class perform at bi-annual recitals and are encouraged to participate in the annual UIL Solo Contest.

Chamber Orchestra

Teacher: Sarre, Russell - Russell.Sarre@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

Chamber is our top orchestra and will perform at all UIL Concert and Sight-reading events. Students are expected to participate in Solo and Ensemble. Students will continue to grow as musicians as they perform more challenging music and develop their professionalism. There will be after-school rehearsals which all Chamber players are required to attend. Audition minimum requirements: 2 Major Scales and Arpeggios (2 octave) bowing as requested. Audition piece consistent with level 3 UIL Solo and Ensemble.

Dance Company (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Pollard, April L - APOLLAR2@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

This class is for stage performers that represent Pershing at various venues, competitions, performances as well as school events. Dance Company consists of Dancers from 7th and 8th Grade who will audition in the Spring and will meet the following qualifications: 75 or above average for all classes with no failing grades, No Discipline Referrals, Leadership qualities, and Appropriate outside training. Advanced Dancers will be placed in the class based on their audition and/or daily class efforts, choreography, participation, technique, growth, and overall dance ability. Advanced dancers will participate in 2-3 campus performances throughout the year. It is recommended that Advanced Dancers attend any extra classes offered to them to help propel their dance ability.

Intermediate Theatre (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Adams, Bridget L - BADAMS7@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

In this course students will continue to develop and strengthen their acting and performance skills through scene study, script analysis, and play production. Students will be required to participate in at least one production per year. This course is open to 7th and 8th grade students in the Theatre Magnet program. Students must audition for this class to be considered for placement. Students must maintain a passing average in all courses to be eligible for consideration.

Intro to Technical Theatre – Tech I (6th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Mirabella, Annalise C - Annalise.Mirabella@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

In this course we will focus on beginning stage craft techniques that are the foundation for technical theatre. The objective is to introduce the student to the fundamental elements and principles of technical theatre through hands-on project-based learning. Students will learn the functions of the creative team, production staff, technicians, and stage crew. Basic elements of construction, design concepts, lighting and sound technologies, advertising, and stage management. Students will gain the confidence and technique needed to become a skilled technician.

** Technicians are required to work shows and complete Tech Hours as part of their grade.

Jazz Band (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Atkins, Tyler - Tyler.Atkins@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

Jazz Band is an ensemble that plays a variety of styles from different eras. Students must also be in a concert band class to be in Jazz Band. Students in this ensemble are chosen by the director and it is primarily for 7th and 8th graders. Incoming 6th graders with prior experience may be able to join as well.

Musical Theatre – Theatre II (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Mirabella, Annalise C - Annalise.Mirabella@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Theatre I/Dance I/Choir I and Teacher Approval Only

In this course we will explore Musical Theatre through the workshop process. Students will survey many facets of musical theatre through performance and research. The course will also provide an atmosphere in which students benefit from a teaching and learning experience in these performance disciplines of Broadway-style Musical Theatre. Through performing, viewing, analyzing, and critiquing musical theatre productions, the student will have a greater understanding of what makes an effective musical theatre performance and develop acting, vocal, and movement skills to improve their own work in theatre. The course will enhance and cultivate the creative gifts of each student while encouraging a sense of self-confidence.

Studio Guitar - ADV Guitar (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Sarre, Russell - Russell.Sarre@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Guitar I and Audition/Teacher Approval

Students will audition with two octave scale and two audition pieces equivalent to UIL Solo and ensemble level 3 demonstrating correct Classical guitar technique.

Students in Studio guitar will learn advanced techniques of classical guitar including Full Bar, Extended Scale-patterns, Expressive techniques (Vibrato, Portamento, Glissando) Melody and Arpeggio technique, Ornamentation, Upper position playing (7th Position) Contrapuntal music, Harmonics, Introduction to tremolo.

Swim Gym (6th Grade)

Teacher: Snook, Dave – Dave.Snook@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Try outs/Teacher Approval

Swim Gym takes the place of regular Physical Education class and teaches the four basic swim strokes, (Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Butterfly). Students will also learn flip turns and starts from the blocks. In addition to learning swimming techniques students play/learn Water Polo and Water Volleyball. Pershing is the only school in HISD that offers 6th grade swimming and one of two middle school with a touch pad timing system. We have a heated, indoor pool so students will swim all year.

Theatre Arts II (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Adams, Bridget L - BADAMS7@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Theatre Arts I

In this course students build upon what they have learned in Theatre I. Students will continue to develop an understanding for different acting and performing techniques. Students will also deepen their understanding of the history of theatre and stagecraft.

Theatre Production – Advanced Theater (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Adams, Bridget L - BADAMS7@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

In this course students focus on learning the process of participating in the UIL One Act Play Contest and play production. Student will be required to participate in at least one production per semester. This course is open to 7th and 8th grade students in the Theatre Magnet program. Students must audition for this class to be considered for placement. Students need to be available to come to afterschool rehearsals and must maintain a passing average in all courses to be eligible for consideration.

Technical Theatre Production – Tech II (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Mirabella, Annalise C - Annalise.Mirabella@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Tech I and Audition/Teacher Approval

The course is an exploration of the duties of stage technicians and their contribution to the total aesthetic effect of a production. Topics covered include design research and application of scene shop organization; painting and construction techniques, equipment use and maintenance, application of sound, lighting, and computer technology, the use of special effects, costume and makeup; publicity and business management, and the function of stage personnel with production work. We will also prep students for high school and professional work by assembling portfolios and resumes. The students in this class will also get the opportunity to design for the main stage shows!

** Technicians are required to work shows and complete Tech Hours as part of their grade.

Varsity Tenor/Bass Chorale & Varsity Treble Chorale (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Boudreaux, Emily – Emily.Boudreaux@houstonisd.org

These classes are the advanced choral ensembles at Pershing and require an audition. Chorale members are strong singers, confident sight readers, and experienced ensemble members who represent the choral department at the annual UIL Concert and Sight-Reading Evaluation. Students must have been in a Pershing choir for at least one year or have previous experience in a school, religious, or community choir. All members take a sight-reading test at the end of each semester.

Wind Ensemble - ADV Band (7th – 8th grade)

Teacher: Atkins, Tyler Tyler.Atkins@houstonisd.org

Prerequisite: Audition/Teacher Approval

Wind Ensemble is a Varsity level band. Students are chosen to be in this band and are expected to perform at high levels in the ensemble. This ensemble is primarily for 7th and 8th graders, but 6th graders can audition at the end of the Fall semester.