

Future Cycle Courses  
Ramapo Ridge Middle School  
Executive Summary

June 1, 2019

The updating of cycle courses at Ramapo Ridge Middle School has been a standing goal for the school and district, especially in recent years. Past related efforts resulted in discussions regarding bell schedule options and overall program of studies structures. While bell schedule options and programmatic structure-related conversations will likely remain future Ridge considerations, priorities emerged for what could be moved on in the immediate future.

The updating of the Ridge's cycle courses is aligned with the current district's technology goals as well as the ongoing development of the Pathways programs at Mahwah High School. Revamping the menu of exploratory courses was identified as an opportunity to strengthen the continuum of grades 6-12 offerings and to create a balanced program of studies that is appropriate for middle school students in the areas of STEAM and the humanities.

The new cycle courses are envisioned to offer a curriculum that is relevant for the modern learner. The new courses also reflect a deliberate intent to ensure for each and every Ridge student to have time during the school day for hands-on project based learning and to experience basic elements of the Engineering Design Process and the thinking and skill sets it requires.

The new cycle courses are designed to lend themselves to be responsive to various bell schedules and structures. Cycle courses currently consist of approximately 35-37 forty-five minute class sessions. However, the new cycle courses will be able to accommodate virtually any possible future bell schedule and/or programmatic structures we could consider.

The new cycle courses include two three-part series.

The first series is our STEAM series which will include: *Dress CODE* (Grade 6), *Mind & Bot* (Grade 7), and *R3* (Grade 8). These courses will be home-grown STEAM courses that have been envisioned as introductory feeder programs to courses in the Mahwah High School Program of Studies. *Dress CODE* will employ maker principles as students design wearable technologies and utilize Arduino programs. *Mind & Bot* will be a robotics-based course in which students will engage Lego EV3 Mindstorm robots and software in a blended learning environment. *R3* or *Rethink, Reimagine, Redesign* will expose students to three-dimensional design software, collaborative teaming, and the Engineering Design Process.

The second series is titled *Image, Sound, and Story*. The courses in this series were developed by The Jacob Burns Film Center. The series offers a 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum that employs hands-on projects that are guided by the JBFC's Learning Framework goals: building skills of observation, comprehension, and analysis for viewing media and developing imagination, intention, and student media production. *Image, Sound, and Story* will be

implemented at each grade level and will support learners as they develop their visual and aural communication skills. The series will be a natural feeder program for the film program at MHS.

*Digi APP* is another home-grown course in which students will learn how to actively digest digital content and interpret it through a critical lens. Students will grow to appreciate the power and purpose of their digital world as they continue to form their worldview. Students will develop an awareness of the effects digital tools and applications have on their lives both online and offline.

In *Project Citizen*, students will explore how to be active citizens through action-research projects; they will identify problems, conduct research, create solutions, and then present findings using current social, political, and economic issues such as: wellness, climate change, migration, voter participation, equality, and justice. As students move through the cycle, they may experience different perspectives, from Ramapo Ridge to Mahwah, from the state to the nation and finally from our nation to the world community.

These eight new courses will foster innovative, forward-thinking, and responsive modern learning experiences designed to help Ridge students explore future pathways and pursuits.