

Sixth Grade
Program
2021-2022

Strath Haven Middle School

A safe and respectful school environment that promotes academic success and strives to meet the affective needs of all students

Integrated Language Arts

The sixth grade Language Arts program features an integration of reading and writing instruction within a block (two periods) of time, providing approximately ninety minutes of uninterrupted instruction. Teachers use a balanced approach to literacy, which is designed to help students develop reading and writing skills and strategies for their specific learning needs. The sixth grade Language Arts program is aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

Reading Workshop, a research-based reading program out of Teachers College in Columbia University, provides rich opportunities for students to work interactively with a variety of texts and genres. The Lucy Calkins program for reading comprehension, fluency and stamina began in WSSD with a third – fifth grade implementation in 2013. All incoming sixth graders from WSSD elementary schools have been engaged with this nationally recognized approach to reading. Book selection is interest-based and leveled according to the program guidelines for “Just Right Books.” Teacher modeling of reading strategies, independent conferences, small group differentiation, and book partnerships/clubs are the backbones of the program, creating an environment of text inquiry and excitement for reading that will challenge students at individual levels and prepare them for seventh and eighth grade literacy.

In response to class novels, independent reading, book clubs and non-fiction texts, students write narrative, expository, and persuasive essays and try their hand at creative writing and poetry. Explicit writing instruction emphasizes the domains of focus, content, and organization and builds toward more sophisticated writing throughout the school year. Grammar and mechanics are taught within the context of writing instruction. Through mentor text study, students are exposed to literary terms and concepts, including plot, character, setting, theme, mood, characterization, conflict, parody, irony, hyperbole, and personification.

Social Studies

The sixth grade social studies program focuses on the study of ancient world cultures. Students acquire an awareness of the ways in which we learn about the past through the methods and tools of the historian and archaeologist. This is accomplished through the study of Early Human Ancestors, Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, Greece and Rome. Students are encouraged to develop empathy for the past, an awareness of place, and an understanding of human and environmental interaction. Students also study world geography and current events. The students start a journey of critical thinking and analysis through persuasive writing and debate techniques. The middle social studies curriculum utilizes the Discovery ED Platform, an interactive on-line techbook that features a multimedia approach to historical resources.

Math

The curriculum for sixth grade Math is the U.S. edition of the top-rated Singapore math program, *Math in Focus*, which follows the pedagogical framework that includes emphasizing concept mastery, a concrete-to-pictorial-to-abstract approach, metacognitive reasoning and the use of model drawing to solve and justify problems.

Math in Focus is a mastery program aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that focuses on the following ideals in order to promote student success: a focused and coherent syllabus which allows fewer topics in each grade taught to greater depth; a visual and balanced approach that follows the concrete-to-pictorial-to-abstract progression; a focus on numbers and operations throughout the series which ensures that students develop and maintain a strong number sense; an emphasis on problem solving using model-drawing which utilizes strategies for solving routine and non-routine problems; and the recognition of the importance of attitudes and the ability to self-monitor while problem solving to achieve success in math. *Math in Focus* provides students with the tools they need to break down complex concepts and problems, which in turn develops positive attitudes.

Entering middle school students have been placed into Math 6, Enriched Math 6 or Accelerated Math 6/7. Math 6 and Enriched Math 6 cover the same mathematical topics while offering students opportunities to apply and extend their thinking throughout the year. Students in a Math 6 class progress at a pace that provides appropriate opportunities for repeated practice and reinforcement of skills and concepts. Students in an Enriched Math 6 class progress at a pace which provides a range of higher-challenge opportunities in addition to the same core skills and concepts taught in Math 6. Accelerated Math 6/7 will cover all of the same mathematical topics taught in Enriched Math 6. In addition, students will be exposed to selected chapters of 7th grade Math in Focus. This class is designed to meet the needs of our highest performing math students through an accelerated pace, a range of higher-challenge opportunities and an in-depth study of the core concepts.

Science

The sixth grade science program is an integrated study of science, with a strong emphasis on cooperative learning and laboratory work. The hands-on nature of the program helps to facilitate conceptual visualization. Students will study science foundations, measurements, matter, elements, weather, space, and ecology. The first science project, taught in conjunction with computer science classes, involves researching one of the elements. Students will learn about the Earth and the processes that shaped it, as well as the rocks and geologic features of Pennsylvania. Through the study of Space, students will engage in a variety of interactive learning opportunities designed to enrich their understanding of Earth's role in the

solar system. Students will, upon completion of the Space Unit, have a better understanding of the mechanics of the universe.

Foreign Language

The four foreign language choices for incoming sixth graders are Spanish, French, Mandarin Chinese and German. All courses meet every day and students receive grades based on the middle school grading policy. Students taking a foreign language make a commitment to the study of that language during their three years of middle school. All foreign language classes focus on the five basic language skills pertinent to their selected language: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and culture.

QUARTERLY COURSES (9 weeks):

6th Grade Computer Science and Literacy

Computer Science strives to be innovative and keep pace with the ever-changing world of technology. This course is designed to help students integrate technology and 21st century skills across disciplines as well as beyond the classroom to maximize growth. In 6th grade students use creative approaches in the area of coding and web design to take action or solve real world problems. Students use the Design Process, starting with a problem and ending with a presentation of their solutions to this problem to their peers. Additionally, this 9 week course focuses on the importance of being a positive digital citizen.

Innovative Design

We will creatively use design principles to create new thoughts and things. Design entails putting a plan together to fabricate or create something based on something, and we will use all tools available to create a new something or a better something than was made before. We do have some powerful tools to create on hand. We have a computer cart, packed with laptops, we have really decent art materials (pastels, drawing tools, watercolor and acrylic paint, brushes, and much more). We will look for solutions of all kinds of problems, such as attempting to illustrate the flow of water with the repeated use of a student created template, to looking at all things chair. This class, the starting point of our middle school students' focus on art and design principles, is high-energy and serious fun—such, such serious fun!

Music

The focus of this curriculum is multicultural music. Students will experience the music and cultures of many different countries through singing, dancing, composing, and performing on instruments. An introduction to guitar will also be taught in 6th grade music classes. Students will learn how to read, perform, and compose music on acoustic guitars.

Physical Education/Health

This multifaceted class has two components: physical education and health. In physical education, students are introduced to tumbling, rope jumping, fitness, fencing, and international dance (with an emphasis on African Dance). The health curriculum includes study of the human body and exploration of the various developmental, personal, and social issues facing adolescents.

Performing Music Ensembles

Opportunities to perform in music ensembles at Strath Haven Middle School are abundant and include band, chorus, and orchestra. Rehearsal times are from 7:15 a.m. – 8 a.m. The orchestra meets once each week, while the band and chorus rotate their rehearsals. Students and parents receive monthly calendars and schedules. Jazz band and other small ensembles are selected by audition in the fall, and they rehearse two days each week after school. Group music lessons are offered once each week on a rotating pull-out schedule. Students are encouraged to make music performance a part of their school lives. In the past few years, over 70% of the total sixth grade has performed in one or more of the music ensembles offered.

Guidance Counselor: David Stratton

At Strath Haven Middle School, a guidance counselor is assigned to each grade level. The counselor begins working with the sixth graders during their first year in the middle school and stays with them throughout the end of their freshman year in high school. This plan enables the counselor to follow the development of each student during his or her middle school years, while establishing a working relationship with both students and parents. This approach also helps ease the transition to high school. Counselors inform teachers of the needs of each student, acting as a consultant to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. In addition, counselors provide individual counseling, developmental counseling groups, and crisis intervention. The guidance counselor is the liaison between student and teacher and between home and school.

Connections

At the end of the day, after 8th period, Connections meetings are held throughout the school. These meetings, led by teachers and each with about 15 students in attendance, will include end of day closure, team building, opportunities for peer leadership, grading portal checks, grade-level issues rectification, and a litany of other preset structured activities. Our intent is to create a stress-free end-of-day gathering that can solidify the day's instruction and help the students feel more connected as citizens at Strath Haven Middle School.