

Culture Matters

Teachers must be able to *CONNECT* with their learners before they can share core content. Teachers teach learners, not subjects. To truly engage learners, we must reach out to them in ways that are culturally & linguistically responsive and appropriate, and we must examine the cultural assumptions and stereotypes we bring into the classroom that may hinder interconnectedness.



Parents' Guide to Support Learner Success

EMPOWERING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THE COMMON CORE CHALLENGE AT HOME

6TH GRADE

As practitioners in education and facilitators of cultural competency training, we know that in order for learners to be successful in today's schools, parents need to be knowledgeable of the most effective ways to support learning at home. Educators can work collaboratively to assist their learners to be more successful, by tapping into support from home. This guide, which provides an overview of what your child will learn by the end of each grade level in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, prepares your child to be ready to succeed in the next grade level. This guide is based on the new Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by 44 states (*at time of publication*). The Common Core State Standards are much more rigorous than the previously held standards amongst the states. In order to compete globally, our nation needs to increase critical thinking skills in our children.

This guide is designed to offer parents with creative ways to become involved in supporting their child's education as well as ways to communicate the expectations of the Common Core State Standards. If your child is meeting the expectations outlined in these standards, he or she will be prepared for the 7th grade.

WHY ARE ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

The academic standards are important because they help ensure that all learners, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and in their chosen careers. Rigorous standards provide an important first step – a clear roadmap and process for learning – to be utilized by a collaborative team of facilitators of learning, parents, and learners. Having clearly defined goals helps families and facilitators of learning work together to ensure that learners succeed. They also will help your child develop critical thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.



A Snapshot of What Your Child Will Be Concentrating on in 6th Grade

English Language Arts & Literacy

In 6th grade, learners will need a variety of challenging books, articles, and texts, and will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the material by answering questions and contributing to class discussions. The opportunity to write must be on a regular basis. In the writing process, learners will continue to work on their use of language, sentence structure, and organization of ideas. The expectation will be for learners to integrate information from different sources and respond to challenging content through written interpretation and analysis. Activities in these areas will embrace:

- Gaining knowledge from materials that make extensive use of elaborate diagrams and data to convey information and illustrate concepts
- Providing detailed summaries of texts
- Determining the theme of a text and how it is conveyed
- Describing how a particular story or play unfolds and how characters respond to plot developments
- Using a variety of reading strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words as they are used in a text
- Comparing and contrasting various texts, including poems, stories, and historical novels
- Determining the correct meaning of a word based on the context in which it is used (i.e., the rest of the sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence)
- Understanding the figurative and connotative (implied) meaning of words and phrases, such as, *"it's raining cats and dogs."*
- Identifying and evaluating specific claims or arguments in a text or speech, and distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not
- Supporting written claims or arguments with clear reasons and relevant evidence
- Producing clear and coherent writing appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience
- Participating in class discussions about various texts and topics
- Presenting claims and findings to others orally, sequencing ideas logically, and accentuating main ideas or themes
- Writing brief reports that examine a topic, have a clear focus, and include relevant facts, details, and quotations
- Conducting short research projects to answer a question, pulling from several sources; sharpening the focus based on the research findings



Partner with your child's teacher to have a focused conversation about learning

When you talk with your child's teacher keep in mind that you and your child's teacher are partners; a part of a team which includes your child. You are an important part of your child's education. Time may be limited and you can't cover everything. Therefore, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In 6th grade for literacy, these include:

- Reading closely and drawing evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction to support an analysis of what the materials say
- Developing a rich vocabulary of complex and sophisticated words and using them to speak and write more precisely and coherently
- Be prepared to ask the teacher questions like:
 - Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
 - How is my child doing in writing?
 - In what areas is my child excelling?
 - What do you suppose is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
 - What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?
 - If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside of the classroom?

Mathematics

In 6th grade, learners will learn the concept of rates and ratios and use these tools to solve word problems. Learners will focus on working quickly and accurately dividing multi-digit whole numbers and adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing multi-digit decimals. Learners will extend their previous work with fractions and decimals to understand the concept of rational numbers; any number that can be made by dividing one integer by another, such as $\frac{1}{4}$, 0.50, or 2. Learners will also learn how to write and solve equations – mathematical statements using symbols, such as $10+x=35$ – and apply these skills in solving multi-step word problems. Activities in these areas will embrace:

- Understanding and applying the concepts of ratios and unit rates, and using the correct language to describe them (such as, the ratio of wings to beaks in a flock of geese is 2 to 1, because for every 2 wings there is 1 beak)
- Building on knowledge of multiplication and division to divide fractions by fractions and solving word problems (i.e., how wide is a rectangular strip of land with length $\frac{3}{4}$ mile and area $\frac{1}{2}$ square mile)
- Understanding that positive and negative numbers are located on opposite sides of a number line

Continued...

- Using pairs of numbers, including negative numbers, as coordinates for locating or placing a point on a graph
- Writing and determining the value of expressions with whole-number exponents (such as $20+4^2$)
- Identifying and writing equivalent mathematical expressions by applying the properties of operations. For example, recognizing that $2(4+x)$ is the same as $8+2x$
- Understanding that solving an equation such as $3+x=11$ means answering the question, “What number does x have to be to make this statement true?” (8)
- Writing equations to solve word problems and describe relationships between quantities (i.e., the distance D traveled by a train in time T might be expressed by an equation $D=85T$, where D is in miles and T is in hours)
- Representing and analyzing the relationships between independent and dependent variables. (A **dependent variable** is a number whose value depends on other factors, while the value of an **independent variable** is set. For example, in a problem involving a constant speed (such as 50 mph), learners may be asked how many miles will be travelled in 25 minutes. Since distance is determined by time, distance is the **dependent variable**, and time is the **independent variable**.)
- Reasoning about relationships between shapes to determine area, surface area, and volume

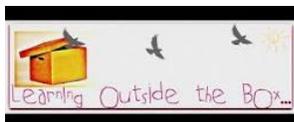
Staying



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- Analyzing and solving problems using concepts of ratio and rate
- Working with variables and expressions
- Analyzing and solving word problems using equations
- Be prepared to ask the teacher questions like:
 - Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
 - In what areas is my child excelling?
 - What do you suppose is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
 - What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?
 - If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside of the classroom?



All learning does not take place in the classroom, nor should it. Learning must continue at home, encouraging learners to “think outside the box.” Try to create a quiet place for your child to study, and set aside time *every day* when your child can concentrate. You should also set aside 15 to 30 minutes each week to sit down with your child, while he or she completes homework. This will help you to stay in tuned with what your child is working on, and it will help you to be the first to know if your child needs assistance with specific topics. Furthermore, here are some activities you can do with your child to support successful learning at home:

English Language Arts & Literacy

- Provide time and space for your child to read independently. This reading time should be free from distractions such as television and gaming activities.
- Ask your child what topics, events, or activities he or she likes. Based upon that information look for books, magazines, or other materials about those topics that would motivate your child to read.
- Model reading at home. It is helpful when your child sees other people reading at home. You can share what you have read.
- Make time for conversation at home. Discuss what is current in the news, shared interests, and your child’s future aspirations as to where to attend college and careers.
- Visit museums, zoos, theaters, historical sites, aquariums, and other educational places to help increase your child’s exposure to new knowledge and vocabulary.
- Listen with your child to a television reporter, politician, or other speaker. Ask your child to tell you the speaker’s main points? Was the speaker trying to convince the audience of something? How? Why do you suppose?
- Encourage your child to learn at the library or on the Internet what life in your community was like 100 years ago. Have your child write a story, poem, or play about the period in time.
- Use technology to help strengthen your child’s interest in reading. Ask your child’s teacher for suggestions of websites where learners can read books or articles on line. The computer will help with words the learner cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers learners can use to access those sites.

Mathematics

- Ask your child to calculate the unit rates of items purchased from the grocery store. For example, if 4 pounds of sugar cost \$3.00, how much does sugar cost per pound?
- Have your child determine the amount of ingredients needed when cooking. For example, if a recipe calls for 8 cups of noodles to serve 4 people, how many cups of noodles do you need to serve 6 people?
- Look for “word problems” in real life. Some 6th grade examples might include:
 - Determining the average speed of a family trip, based on the distance and an estimate of the average speed.
 - Finding the surface area of the walls and ceiling in a room to determine the cost of painting the room.
- Encourage your child to persevere, “sticking to it” whenever a problem seems difficult. This will help your child see that **everyone** can learn math.
- Praise for your child’s efforts in solving problems or understanding something for the first time.



For more information go to www.corestandards.org
the official online home of the Common Core State Standards