

GRADE SIX
2007-2008



The sixth grade curriculum reinforces and strengthens basic language arts and mathematical skills. The incorporation of these skills is emphasized in creative thinking and problem solving. During this phase of their cognitive growth, students are able to take more responsibility for their own learning. We hope to develop in the students a habit of selflearning and joy in learning that will carry them through future academic endeavors.

Social expectations of sixth graders are to be respectful of their teachers, peers, other students, and visitors, and to be accepting of different learning styles and interests, thereby providing good role models as the oldest group in the main building.

ENGLISH: The sixth grade English curriculum focuses on expanding skills in reading, writing, and speaking. Throughout the year students read selections from a variety of genres, write daily, and continue to develop their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Students take part in the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award by reading at least five books from this year's selection and voting on their favorite titles. Much of the literature for the year ties in with the social studies curriculum, which focuses on Vermont history in the fall and the Middle East during the winter. Selections are chosen to highlight current and historical social issues affecting children, including racial prejudice and child labor as well as hunger and poverty, both in New England and around the world.

Students begin to analyze literature as they read from a selection of short stories and examine the use of plot, characters, setting and point of view. Some of the authors include Poe, Bierce, Thurber, Hawthorne, and Bradbury. Sixth graders will have the opportunity to write their own short stories based on the literary elements they have studied. Later, students will read several historical novels about New England, including *Counting on Grace*, *Witness*, and *Hidden Roots* (all new books for this year), and *My Brother Sam is Dead*. Other literature choices during the year include *The Westing Game*, *Shabanu*, and selected poems. Writing and language skills are reinforced through lessons in *Classical Roots*, *How to Spell*, and *Exercises in English*.

Sixth graders practice expository, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive writing in different assignments throughout the year. The final project in the spring gives each student a chance to research a topic of his or her choice, write an in-depth report, and give an oral and visual presentation to an audience.

MATHEMATICS: The sixth grade uses the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project, *Everyday Mathematics* text. In the sixth grade program, students develop a broad background by learning concepts and skills in these six content strands: Number and Numeration; Operations and Computation; Data and Chance; Measurement and Reference Frames; Geometry: Patterns, Functions, and Algebra. Proportional reasoning, the major

mathematical theme for middle school math, will be addressed in the specific topics of fractions, decimals, percents, rates, ratios and scale. Sound foundations in place value and number sense, as well as learning the basics of statistical analysis are stressed. Students are encouraged to demonstrate their mathematical thinking through writing and sharing their work in small groups or on the board. Additionally, integrated curriculum is planned among the disciplines of art, social studies science and math. For example, a geometry unit in Islamic design is integrated with the art department and social studies.

SOCIAL STUDIES: We begin the year with an investigation of Vermont and the Northeast. We study our local and regional history, geography, environment and culture. We travel to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum to “explore the lake and learn about its past, present, and how to help to conserve it in the future.” Mid-year we focus on local and state government and take a trip to the Vermont State House. From February to early May the students take part in the “Mystery Class,” in which they are given the changing amount of sunlight of ten mystery sites and try to discover their exact location. Later in the year, we study the Middle East. Our main focus is the rise and spread of Islam. The texts are taken from a selection of sources, which include *Threads of Time* and *Medieval Civilization*. This unit culminates with a field trip to the Boston area to visit a Mosque, enjoy a Mediterranean meal and view an art exhibit. In cooperation with the art department, the students design and produce an Islamic Geometric tile. Other highlights of this unit may include workshops in Islamic Calligraphy and Lebanese cooking.

SCIENCE: The focus of the sixth grade science program is the interrelationship and interdependence inherent in the functioning of systems in the natural world. We read *Dr Art’s Guide to Planet Earth* (Sussman) and selected chapters from *Ecology: Prentice Hall Science*. Students work on observation, prediction, analysis, comparison, recording information, problem solving, vocabulary and research skills. Working cooperatively in small groups and as a whole class, students develop critical thinking and decision making skills. The scientific method of investigation is emphasized with hands-on experiments and activities. Some of the themes explored throughout the year are the ecology and geology of Vermont, the chemistry of solutions (Glencoe: *Science Interactions*), astronomy, nutrition, and healthy choices.

SOCIAL CURRICULUM: The social curriculum at TGS is designed to complement the academic curriculum and help maintain a healthy social and learning environment. This includes a series of “Community Life” classes at all grade levels that complements and reinforces the classroom-based social curricular activities and goals. We define a healthy school community as a place where people have a sense of belonging, where adults and students extend and receive respect in their relationships with each other and a place where people feel both a sense of support and personal challenge to help them learn and grow as human beings.

PHYSICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: Physical skills development in grade six is a program designed to give a child a chance to develop physically through play, games, skill tasks, and movement activities. Activities are planned to stress various underlying themes of the program: strength, endurance, flexibility, coordination, game skills, sportsmanship and social interaction. The daily program varies in size and structure of the groups. Fall activities include soccer, running and fitness. There is an extended weekly walk in the fall and spring

as long as the good weather holds out. We explore different locales and habitats close to home. In winter, students focus on cross-country skiing and may choose to join the downhill skiing instruction program one afternoon each week. Skating is offered from November to March at a local skating rink. Spring activities include softball, basketball, and Frisbee, as well as other coordination and skill games. The program is varied to meet the needs of and allow interaction between age groups.

COMPUTER: Students are formally introduced to keyboarding through the program, UltraKey. For the first half of the year they work daily to develop their touch-typing. Each child will learn folder, file and disk management. The students will do research via the Internet and CD-ROM. The group will create a 6th grade web page.

HEALTH: During the sixth grade year we investigate a number of components of healthy life choices, nutrition, exercise and sleep. For example, we study nutrition by analyzing the average sixth grade diet and comparing it to the Healthy Eating Pyramid. The students learn to read a nutrition label and make informed healthful choices.

STUDY SKILLS: Organizational study skills are presented and emphasized during the sixth grade year. Students are expected to keep an updated assignment book in their three ring binders. As the year progresses the students are required to plan and work longer and multiple assignments, culminating in an eight-week project in the spring. They can expect homework in all their subjects. Students can expect to have, on average, one hour of homework each day in addition, they are encouraged to free read regularly.