



# Sixth Grade Curriculum

The South Brunswick School District Curriculum being taught at Sixth Grade integrates the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) with developmentally appropriate concepts. We teach for deep understanding of the “big ideas” in each content area, and we encourage students to wonder about the “essential questions.”

Technology is integrated into instruction in meaningful ways. Students and teachers use digital tools and information to solve problems individually and collaboratively to create and communicate knowledge. (NJCCCS 8.1 Technology)

Below is an overview of each content area for the South Brunswick Sixth Grade.

## Language Arts

The South Brunswick Language Arts Curriculum is an integration of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing / media literacy. All the elements are meant to function together; each is incomplete without the others. The curriculum is based on NJCCCS 3.1 (Reading), 3.2 (Writing), 3.3 (Speaking), 3.4 (Listening) and 3.5 (Viewing and Media Literacy).

The Sixth Grade Language Arts program is divided into two sections, Language Arts Literature and Language Arts Composition, which help teachers deliver a balanced literacy approach. Novels, short stories, poetry, and a variety of writing genres are used for reading and writing instruction to provide appropriate challenge.

## **Reading**

It is the intent of our program to develop proficient readers who see themselves as readers, who choose to read, and who will continue to be life-long readers. Reading in the Sixth Grade encompasses the following: core novels, literature circles, independent reading (P.A.T.T.E.R.N.S. and Crossroads Summer Reading), sustained silent reading and read-alouds.

Essential Questions for Reading in Grade 6 include the following:

- *How do we learn from other people’s differences?*
- *Can we gain from losing?*
- *What do we gain from friendships?*
- *In what ways can everyone be a contributor to society?*
- *Do we choose our futures, or are they chosen for us?*
- *How does humor help people during difficult times?*
- *Can someone who breaks the law be a hero or heroine?*

## **Writing**

Teachers use the Writing Workshop approach to teach students the joy and purposes of writing. During Writer’s Workshop teachers use mini-lessons to deliver instruction, provide opportunities for students to write independently, and conduct individual student conferences to increase students’ skills in many genres of writing.

Essential Questions for Writing in Grade 6 include the following:

- *Why is it important for a writer to know his audience?*
- *How does word choice contribute to a strong argument?*
- *Why do people write to persuade others?*

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- *What is the role of supporting evidence in building an argument?*
- *How does word choice contribute to an interesting story?*
- *Why are the elements of a story necessary?*
- *What role does dialogue play in a narrative?*

### **Mathematics**

The South Brunswick Mathematics Program is based on a well-articulated curriculum that is aligned with standards NJCCCS 4.1-4.5, has interwoven technology, is connected in meaningful ways to other curriculum and real life, that provides for differentiated needs of students, that is taught by teachers who are well-grounded in and comfortable with both content and methodology, and that leads to equity and excellence in math achievement for all children.

In Sixth Grade, we build upon the knowledge and skills learned in previous grades in order to provide a strong foundation for later learning. There are two basic math paths that students follow in Sixth Grade: Unit Math or Transitions Math.

Sixth Grade topics of study:

- Unit Mathematics:
  - Number Theory and Numerical Operations
  - Fraction / Decimal / Percent Relationships
  - Geometric Properties, Formulas, and Applications
  - Data Analysis
  - Probability
  - Patterns and Functions
- Transitions Mathematics:
  - Number Theory
  - Rational Number and Integer Operations
  - Geometric Properties, Formulas, and Applications
  - Integrated Coordinate Geometry
  - Probability / Data Analysis / Discrete Math
  - Patterns / Functions / Pre-Algebra

Students in Unit Math use the Connected Mathematics Program which was developed by the National Science Foundation and designed to develop understanding of important mathematical concepts, skills, procedures, and ways of thinking and reasoning, in number, geometry, measurement, algebra, probability and statistics. Students in Transitions Math use Scott Foresman's *University of Chicago Transitions Mathematics*, middle school mathematics (Grades 6 – 9) textbook. In addition, manipulatives, computer software, interactive white boards, and calculators supplement the anchor resources.

### **Science**

It is the intention of South Brunswick Schools to graduate all of its students with the scientific knowledge, skills and habits of mind needed to be life-long learners, critical thinkers, effective communicators and wise decision-makers. Students will develop and use the skills necessary for full participation in a world shaped by science and technology.

Sixth Grade students study the life, Earth and physical sciences based on the following NJCCCS:

- Scientific Processes: 5.1-5.4
- Life Sciences: 5.5.6A.1, 2, 6B.1, 6C.1
- Physics: 5.7.6A.1, 2, 3, 6B.1
- Earth Sciences: 5.8.4A.3, C.1, D.1; 5.8.6B.1, 2, C.1.2, D.1
- Astronomy and Space Science: 5.9.6A.1, 2, 6B.1, 2, 6C.1, 2; 5.9.8A1, 2, 3, 8B1, 8C1, 2, 8D1

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The Sixth Grade units of study and the related essential questions are as follows:

- **Systems:** *Is every part of a system equally important? To what extent does science depend upon trial and error? Does an object at rest have as much energy as an object in motion?*
- **Astronomy:** *Why is it necessary for people to study astronomy? Could life exist somewhere else in the universe? Is all life on Earth affected by the sun and moon? Will we ever know everything about the universe?*
- **Phylogenetics:** *Why is it important for scientists to classify living things? Does every living thing have a purpose; good or bad? Do all organisms need the same living conditions?*
- **Landforms:** *How long does change take? How do rocks tell us about the earth's history? How do different types of maps help us understand our earth?*

### Social Studies

The expectation is that all the students of South Brunswick will develop the social studies skills and knowledge they will need to be active, informed, responsible citizens and contributing members of their communities. The students will understand history as it relates to the present and future of their lives.

Sixth Grade students study World History which includes the topics of Geography, Birth of Civilization and Early Societies. This study is based on the following NJCCCS:

- Social Studies Skills 6.1 A1, 2, 5, 6, 7
- Civics 6.2 A.2, 3, B2, D.4, 5, E.4, 6, 9, 10
- World History 6.3.B.1-5, B.7-11; C.1-7, D.1-3
- Economics: 6.5. B.4
- Geography 6.6 B.2-4, C.5, D.1, 3
- Computer and Information Literacy 8.1 A.8, 10, B.6, 7
- Technology Education 8.2.A.3-5, C.1

The units of study and the related essential questions for Sixth Grade are as follows:

- **Early Human Societies to 500 CE:** *Why are the legacies of one society important to another society? How does the culture of a society influence its development?*
- **Expanding Zones of Exchange and Interaction 500 CE – 1400 CE:** *What caused cultural interactions and what were the consequences of those interactions? What social changes occurred to influence the evolution of governments?*
- **The Age of Global Encounters 1400 CE – 1600 CE:** *What advancements were made during the time of exploration and the Renaissance? How does the culture of a society influence its development?*

### Health Education

South Brunswick students need to be health literate, especially in response to all the input they receive from the media and society. Our District's Health curriculum is firmly based on this teaching of "wellness" which can be defined as a "way of life." Our goal is to help students learn the lessons of wellness and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own health and to make informed choices about their health now – and in the future. The Sixth Grade Health curriculum is based on the core curriculum content standards and is taught by the Health Education teacher.

- **Wellness:** *NJCCCS 2.1 A1, 2, 4; 2.2 B1, 2, 3, 4; 2.2 C1, 2. What are the factors that may influence wellness? What skills will help me maintain personal wellness? How can I make good decisions concerning my health?*
- **First Aid:** *NJCCCS 2.1 A1, B1. What should I do if I encounter an emergency situation? How can I apply basic first aid? Who do I call in an emergency? What would I do to protect myself?*

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- **Nutrition:** NJCCCS 2.1 C1, 2, 3, 4; 2.2 B1, 2, 3. *Why should I care about what I eat? Why do I choose the foods I eat? How can I eat healthy? What is a healthy weight for me and how can I maintain my healthy weight?*
- **Growth and Development:** NJCCCS 2.1 A2; 2.1 B1, 2, 3; 2.1 F1; 2.4 A1, 2, 3, 4; 2.4 B1, 2, 5; 2.4 C1, 2. *What are the physical, emotional, and social changes that occur during adolescence? When will I change? Where can I safely go to get accurate answers concerning my health questions and concerns?*
- **S.A.F.E. (Drug, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Peer Pressure):** NJCCCS 2.3 B1, 2, 3, 6, 8. *Who would be in a better position to make choices about your life than you?*

The course outline for Sixth Grade is as follows:

1. Wellness/Health Triangle/Healthy Habits
2. Influences on Health/Health Skills
3. Decision Making/Goal Setting
4. Mental/Emotional Health
5. Social Health
6. Physical Health
7. Benefits of Physical Activity
8. Nutrition/Dietary Guidelines
9. Food Guide Pyramid
10. Food Choices
11. Healthy Menus
12. Maintaining Healthy Weight
13. Seven Stages of Life
14. Adolescence/Puberty
15. Changing Minds
16. Hygiene
17. Male Anatomy
18. Female Anatomy
19. Menstruation and Sperm Production
20. Abstinence
21. Pregnancy and Childbirth
22. Heredity
23. S.A.F.E. Program (drug/alcohol/tobacco and peer pressure) is taught by the community police in conjunction with the science teachers.

### **World Language**

We believe that language acquisition opens the door to global awareness. In the South Brunswick school community, every student will have the opportunity to acquire at least one world language through sustained study beginning in early elementary school and continuing through high school. The language acquisition environment will be one that promotes communication and individual student success.

The World Languages curricula are based on the NJCCCS 7.1.A-C (Communication) and 7.2.A-C (Culture) and the Standards for Classical Language Goals 1 - 5. In Sixth Grade, world language classes are held every other day as part of the Encore Program. The curriculum is taught through thematic units using text, music, games, songs, choral response, technology and activities.

Students may continue with the study of Spanish that was begun in elementary school, or they may elect to take French or Latin. There is a District expectation that a student studies the same language throughout his or her middle school experience.

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The units of study within each content area are as follows:

### **Spanish**

- **Unit I: *Mucho gusto***: The learner will be able to meet and greet people using formal and casual greetings.
- **Unit II: *El tiempo y los planes***: Seasons and climate dictate, in part, what types of clothing are worn in a given country. The learner will be able to describe the weather and the activities you plan to do on vacation.
- **Unit III: *Vamos a hacer las maletas***: The learner will be able to describe the items of clothing necessary to take on a trip.
- **Unit IV *Como Vamos***: The learner will be able to identify their travel destination and the modes of transportation needed to arrive.
- **Unit V: *La Comida***: The learner will be able to name food items according to categories: dairy, fruits, seeds, grains and meats. The learner will be able to order food in a restaurant.
- **Unit VI: *Me siento mal***: The learner will be able to express symptoms and illnesses to a Spanish-speaking doctor.

### **French**

- **Unit I: *Je parle français***: Many aspects of communication are common to all languages.
- **Unit II: *Ma famille***: Family can be defined in many ways.
- **Unit III: *Ma maison***: Living space effects daily life.
- **Unit IV: *Mardi Gras***: People get excited during the celebration of holidays because the festivities stimulate all five senses.
- **Unit V: *Au Café***: Sharing a meal with others nourishes the body and the soul.
- **Unit VI: *Le Cirque***: Circus acts are universal in their appeal.

### **Latin**

- **Unit I: *Imperium Romanum***: The learner will be able to identify ancient provinces and relate them to their modern counterparts.
- **Unit II: *Latina et Anglica***: The learner will be able to identify parts of speech and translate simple Latin sentences.
- **Unit III: *Familia Romana***: The learner will be able to compare and contrast the members of a typical Roman family with their own.
- **Unit IV: *Translating Latin for Meaning***: The learner will be able to interpret differing number and gender in Latin nouns and adjectives.
- **Unit V: *Transitive Verbs***: The learner will be able to recognize the direct object in the accusative case and manipulate subjects and direct objects in Latin sentences.
- **Unit VI: *Colors & Clothes***: The learner will be able to discuss Roman clothing, describe their colors in both Latin and English, and compare to their own.
- **Unit VII: *The Infinitive***: The learner will be able to interpret the infinitive in two grammatical constructions.
- **Unit VIII: *Introduction to Conjugations***: The learner will be able to express the translation of Latin verb personal endings using the correct English pronouns.

### **Art**

The Arts bring an important dimension to the educational program of the schools. Arts education draws upon personal feelings and experience as well as on logical and intellectual thought.

Most students in Sixth Grade receive one marking period per year of Integrated Art as part of the Encore schedule (30 classes per trimester). The word “integrated” refers to the connection that art has to the Sixth Grade core curriculum—LA, math, social studies and science—as well as the other art forms (music, physical movement, technology). The curriculum is based on the NJCCCS for Visual and Performing Arts:

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1.1 (Aesthetics), 1.2 (Creation), 1.3 (Elements and Principles of Visual Arts), 1.4 (Critique), and 1.5 (History and Culture).

Students continue to explore the concepts and principles of color, shape, form, line, texture, and pattern and to use a variety of media and materials as appropriate for grade level. Students increase their skills with greater mastery of media and tools, they critique artwork, they express an idea visually and begin the process of self-assessment and feedback to improve work, and they recognize and respond to works of art, movements, and artists.

Among the essential questions that Sixth Graders study:

- *How does an artist connect with his/her work and other artists' work?*
- *How does analyzing art develop personal growth?*
- *How does the creation of art demonstrate a visual understanding of the elements and principles of design?*
- *What does the artwork tell you about the artist?*
- *How do we learn about different cultures through art?*
- *Why is learning about each other's cultures important?*
- *What information can you receive from observing a work of art?*

### Music

The South Brunswick Elementary Music Curriculum is designed to allow students to experience music through many different venues such as singing, movement, games and activities, classroom instruments, composition and performance. Students learn that music is all around us. Music reflects life, builds a sense of community and helps define cultural identity. It is an art form and a form of entertainment. Students will understand that music is a universal language and music allows us to transcend time.

The mission of the Crossroads Middle School Music Department is to provide music students with performance opportunities that are challenging, realistic and enriching. We strive to increase each performer's musical, technical and interpretive skills through ensembles and group lessons. Students new to our program will be screened and placed in the most appropriate learning situation to meet the needs of the child. Beginning music students are most welcome and will be placed in a performing ensemble as soon as their individual progress allows.

In Sixth Grade, most students receive general music instruction for one trimester of their Sixth Grade year (30 classes). The General Music Exploration Program, Instrumental and Vocal-Choral Music Programs for sixth graders are based on the NJCCCS for Visual and Performing Arts: 1.1 Aesthetics, 1.2, Creation, 1.3 Elements and Principles, 1.4 Critique and 1.5 History and Culture. The mission of the Crossroads Music Department is to provide music students with general music and instrumental and vocal music performance opportunities that are challenging, realistic and enriching. We strive to increase each student's musical, technical and interpretive skills through general music instruction, ensembles and group lessons.

#### General Music

General music students continue to develop music-reading skills, and study music as it relates to world cultures and history, music dictation, theory and composition. Students also continue to develop their aural and vocal skills.

The following Essential Questions are related to the Music Exploration course of study:

- *Is all music beautiful?*
- *How does creating and performing music differ from listening to music?*
- *When is music entertainment and when is it an art?*
- *Why do we listen to music?*

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- *Why do we like the music we like?*
- *Is all sound music?*
- *How does music impact our lives?*

### **Instrumental Music Program**

Students may also choose to study a band or orchestra instrument. Beginner and advanced ensembles are offered to students who study instruments. Instrumental Lessons are pullout of students' physical education classes. Instrumental performing groups meet before the day. Students new to our program will be screened and placed in the most appropriate learning situation to meet the needs of the child. Beginning music students are most welcome and will be placed in a performing ensemble as soon as their individual progress allows. Students will receive a grade for band or orchestra on their report cards.

Essential Questions for the instrumental music program include:

- *What role does my instrument play within an ensemble?*
- *Is all sound music?*
- *What is the role of music in my life?*
- *How does playing an instrument allow me to express myself?*
- *How does my individual behavior as a performer and/or an audience member affect the musical performances?*

### **Choir Program**

Sixth Grade students are eligible to sing in chorus. Choir meets at the end of the day during period 8. Winter and spring concerts are performed for the school community. Students who participate in choir will receive a grade on their report card for this course. Students involved in the choral program must take two voice lessons during a lunch period each marking period.

Essential Questions for this course include:

- *What role does my voice play within the choir?*
- *Is all sound music?*
- *How does my individual behavior as a performer and/or an audience member affect the musical performance?*
- *How does my individual participation benefit the whole ensemble?*

### **Technology**

The mission of technology education in the Sixth Grade curriculum is for students to learn and be able to demonstrate proper keyboarding techniques, make simple formatting changes using the Microsoft Word software program and to increase student vocabulary through the use of word processing.

Most students in Sixth Grade receive one marking period per year of Keyboarding Applications as part of the Encore schedule (30 classes per trimester). This course teaches students why proper keyboarding skills are essential, how many future tasks will benefit from having keyboarding skills and how effective keyboarding and word processing skills can increase personal productivity and efficiency. Moreover, students will understand that proficiency in keyboarding and computer word processing is an essential life skill.

### **PE**

The mission of the Physical Education curriculum is to promote students' individual fitness and to develop in students an appreciation for wellness, and the knowledge and skills to maintain a healthy active lifestyle.

The curriculum integrates the NJCCCS 2.1 (Wellness), 2.2 (Integrated Skills), 2.5 (Motor Development), and 2.6 (Fitness) with the National Association of Sports and Physical Education Standards:

- NASPE Standard 1: Demonstrate competency in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities.

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- NASPE Standard 2: Demonstrate understanding of movement concepts, principles, strategies, and tactics as they apply to the learning and performance of physical activities.
- NASPE Standard 3: Participate regularly in physical activity.
- NASPE Standard 4: Achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.
- NASPE Standard 5: Exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.
- NASPE Standard 6: Value physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

The curriculum incorporates units on fitness, individual and team games, recreational and life-time sports, and team-building and challenge activities.

### **Library-Media Program**

The overall goal of the libraries is to help South Brunswick students read extensively and become information literate. Librarians, in collaboration with classroom teachers, guide students to read and to acquire skills to access, analyze and ethically use ideas and information with competence and confidence. The American Association of School Librarians' "Nine Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning" and "Standards for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners" serve as the foundation for the work students do in their school libraries.

We build upon the knowledge and skills learned in Fifth Grade and focus upon the following skills and knowledge in Sixth through Eighth Grade:

- Recreational reading (book selection strategies, selection aids, genre displays)
- Databases (selecting, accessing, searching)
- Web site evaluation (accuracy, validity, currency, relevance)
- Copyright/Ethical Use (plagiarism, citation)
- Classification (resource location)
- Search Strategies (keywords, broadening/narrowing)
- Policies and Procedures
- Technology (troubleshooting, Internet safety)

### **Sixth Grade Research Task**

Research and writing skills are central components to being a life-long learner, critical thinker, effective communicator and wise decision-maker. Through collaborative effort between the library-media specialist and classroom teachers, this integrated unit of study helps to build information-literate students who are confident and able of finding answers to questions through the research process.

Task: With group members, students select an early society they feel has had significant impact on today's world. Each student then researches a specific aspect of this society (e.g. system of currency), compiles findings in a persuasive essay, and constructs an accompanying museum piece (a physical artifact or model with a short summary). Together the group makes a multimedia presentation of their collective findings to the "Museum Board." Their goal is to persuade the Board to include their society in the Legacy Museum.

### **Character Education: Crossroads Cares About Character**

Crossroads Middle School, like the rest of the schools in South Brunswick, embrace the following core values, CARES, in an effort to build positive school citizens in our learning community. This is supported through our District's Character Education Program.

- C Cooperation*
- A Assertion*
- R Responsibility*
- E Empathy*
- S Self-control*

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The core values are emphasized and reinforced through the Unit organizational structure. A unit is defined as a group of 110-130 students who work and learn together each day with a core group of teachers who support them in all aspects of their development. As such, every child is known by well by both the adults and children in their small learning community. Unit teachers bring the students together on a periodic basis for the purpose of team-building and character development. The core values are at the heart of their work.

### **Standardized Assessments for Sixth Grade**

- Literacy and Math: NJASK LAL and Math Tests
- Social Studies Sixth Grade Research Task
- End-of-unit and end-of-year math assessments/tests
- Best Works Writing Portfolio (year-long)
- FitnessGram Assessments (throughout the year in PE)

### **Reporting System**

- Sixth Grade Report Cards are sent home in December, March and June.
- Parent Conferences are scheduled every fall and spring.
- The teacher and/or the parent may request additional conferences.
- NJASK Parent Report is sent home in late summer/early fall following receipt from the State.
- Family Connect, the online grade book system, provides “real time” information to students and parents about progress.