



## Friends School Haverford

### Sixth Grade Curriculum Overview

#### **Language Arts**

Sixth grade Language Arts centers on the Reading and Writing Workshop. This format allows students to grow both independently and with others as readers and writers. Specific reading and writing strategies and skills are taught in mini-lessons and students are given the opportunity to practice these in whole class and independent activities and assignments. One of the most important outcomes of the Reading and Writing workshops is thoughtful literacy. Students learn to slow down, notice, record, and finally talk about the thoughts they have as they read. They then carry these lines of thought through and between texts. In order to think with growing sophistication and complexity about texts, students learn how to talk and write thoughtfully about texts and then practice these skills in partnerships, small groups, literature circles, and in writing nightly response journal entries. Students' writing becomes more formal in Writing Workshop where the writing process is emphasized. Students extend lines of thinking about texts by writing literary essays. Writing personal essays allow students to make connections with characters in the texts they read and reflect in writing on their own lives and the world in which they live. Research techniques and writing is emphasized throughout the year. Students write research papers on topics related to science and Costa Rica and format them using in-text citation, and works cited pages according to the Modern Language Association (MLA format).

#### **Math**

Students in sixth grade math work with the *Connected Mathematics* program, supplemented with other texts and teacher created materials, to explore mathematical ideas embedded in challenging problems. Whether real world, whimsical situations, or purely mathematical, the problems provide students with a vehicle for understanding and remembering mathematical concepts. Problems allow students to use prime numbers, factors, multiples, fractions, decimals and percents. Students also work with probability, two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. Students work independently, in large and small groups, and are expected to represent and communicate their reasoning in writing, class work and participation, group and individual projects, and formal assessments.

#### **Social Studies**

Social studies in the sixth grade is largely integrated with other content areas. In addition to current event discussions, students compare government structures as they explore themes in their literature circles. "Real world" math problems result in discussions about the impact of high gas prices on the economy, or discussions about crop rotation as students plan a community garden. Students will often look at history in the context of a song in music class, or a study a scientist in science class whose work has had a particular impact on the world in which we live.

The "Costa Rica Study Tour" is a unique opportunity for the sixth grade to visit another culture. On the tour FSH students meet the children at our sister school, Escuela Los Altos San Luis, and participate in a project with the students. The farmers at the Café Monteverde Coffee Cooperative teach the sixth graders how coffee is picked and processed and how other food is grown on the cooperative. The guided tour through the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve allows the students to experience firsthand the plants and animals of Cloud Forest that they have studied in the classroom. As sixth grade students participate in various projects throughout the school and serve on committees with their classmates, and travel to another country, they learn the relevance their work and the impact their lifestyle has to their

community and their world.

### **Science**

The sixth grade year begins with an integrated science and math unit on genetics. Using Gregor Mendel's discoveries as background, students use probability to explore how traits are passed from generation to generation. In order to be more aware of their own learning style, grade 6 science classes start the year by exploring the 8 multiple intelligences and creating 100% intelligent graph of themselves. We then explore their perceptions of who is a scientist and what they do. Per the National Science Standards, it is important that students have an understanding of the history of science, and that people develop science. In an integrated project with Language Art, Technology and Library, students pick scientists, and then research their life and work using the Internet, books and encyclopedias. Students create a research paper using MLA formatting, then summarize their research papers, write and deliver a monologue in the character of their scientists. Students make web pages in technology class to house their research papers and videotape their monologues.

### **Art**

Sixth graders are expected to work with significant independence through process oriented, hands-on activities that challenge their creativity and problem solving skills on a higher conceptual level. Another major focus is on community, teamwork, and communication.

### **Music**

Sixth graders continue honing their skills to assure musical independence. A review of previously learned basic musical concepts through more challenging material, using the concepts but demanding higher-level skills best describes the overall musical training in sixth grade. Opportunities to solve problems and create in small groups and through the various means of performance the Orff-Schulwerk\* approach provides are especially valuable at this level. We explore mixed meter, modal scales, more complex chord changes, and the 12-bar blues through movement, composition, improvisation, singing and performance. Material relating to social studies themes, and to other cultures, is also incorporated. Sixth graders have two 40-minute music classes each week in the music room.

### **Chorus Overview**

One component of the Friends School Haverford music curriculum that involves all fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students is the Friends School Haverford Chorus. Students rehearse once a week for 40 minutes. In addition to being a way to practice and apply musical skills that have been learned in their general music experiences, the chorus also provides practical experience in being and serving a community.

Musically, the chorus curriculum mainly addresses singing skills such as proper posture and breathing, unison singing, and harmony singing. Vocal placement and vocal health are also addressed. Students use percussion, Orff instruments, and other instruments, whenever possible, to accompany and take ownership of their performances. Movement opportunities are also present in the form of choreography, body percussion, and improvised movement. Each major performance will include songs in a variety of styles, tempos, meters, tonalities, and languages.

The chorus performs as an ensemble selected times throughout the year. Their debut performance is at Grandfriends' Day in the fall, and their major presentation is at the Spring Concert and Celebration of the Arts. Other performances occur when opportunities arise, such as during all-school meetings, open-house days, and during service-oriented trips to nursing homes and other venues. Choral-type activities continue right through the end of the year with a song being performed during graduation.

**Physical Education**

The program emphasizes team sports that students may choose to play in coming years. Skill development and rule interpretation, good sportsmanship and full game participation are stressed. An after school program is offered one-two afternoons a week throughout the school year. 5th and 6th graders are leaders in the school community by serving as safeties. Safeties help younger children out of cars and walk them to their classrooms in the morning.

Revised 09/08