

Grade 6 Curriculum Summary

(The text that follows is adapted from the websites of member schools of the Alliance for Public Waldorf education and the san Francisco Waldorf School.)

The children entering the twelfth year in the sixth grade begins to experience an important change in their physical bodies. In earlier years, their movements were naturally graceful (generally speaking), but now a certain clumsiness often appears, as if the children don't know quite what to do with their bodies. On the inner level the child is entering strongly into a conscious awareness of the skeletal system. The child is more aware of gravity and weight; growth in the skeletal and muscular systems challenge the student's capacities for balance and coordination, They are seeking a conscious recovery of order and control over themselves.

Science. With this increased awareness of the physical body, this is the appropriate time to introduce the study of the physical body of the earth and its mechanical laws. **Mineralogy** and **Geology** form a major unit of study in the sixth grade, focusing on comparative studies of major geographic and geologic formations, and on the identification and classification of mineral components of rocks.

Physics is also introduced this year. During the course of study, the child learns to understand and appreciate the phenomena of sound, light, heat, electricity, and magnetism, while developing his/her observational and explanatory skills. . It is at this stage that concepts based on the laws of mechanics are introduced. The introduction of the physical sciences at this age is also a response to the intellectual development of the sixth grade child, which is characterized by greater powers of discernment and judgment and a new capacity to grasp cause and effect.

The study of **Astronomy** is introduced this year, concentrating on those bodies of the solar system that are directly observable by the naked eye. The effects of the Sun and the Moon on the cyclical phenomena we experience on Earth are explored through observation and simple experimentation. The five "visible" planets are studied, and the major constellations of the Northern Hemisphere are identified. The telling of the myths behind the names of the constellations provides rich material for the creative writing exercises in sixth grade.

Mathematics. These abilities are further developed in the **mathematics** curriculum, which focuses on the introduction of practical business operations that govern the flow of money and commodities. This, of course, requires the ability to manipulate all arithmetic operations with facility. Elementary algebraic manipulations will also be gradually introduced over the course of the year, so that the child will better assimilate the systematic introduction of Algebra when it is presented intensively in the seventh grade.

Geometry instruction in sixth grade introduces the use of the modern compass and straight edge to construct the circle and polygons resulting from its division. Basic proofs will be derived inductively through the construction of geometric forms; the child will learn to copy and bisect angles as well as construct parallel and perpendicular lines; and the concept of pi will be developed pictorially and arithmetically. Whereas geometric shapes have in the prior grades been drawn freehand as artistic

exercises, the sixth grader learns the mathematical properties of these forms and strives to construct them with great accuracy using ruler and compass.

The **History** curriculum that governs much of the sixth grade **language arts** work takes as its theme Rome and medieval Christian Europe, and Moslem North Africa. The study of the Roman epoch begins with the mythical account of the travels of Aeneas and his founding of the city; it examines the evolution of Roman government, laws and rights through its successive rulers, the wars it waged, and its great achievements in technology and the arts; and it charts the events leading to its decline and the concomitant rise of Christianity and Islam.

The Roman epoch epitomizes in an historical sense what the children are experiencing in their bodies. Of all the ancient peoples the Romans most strongly dominated the physical world. Their cities, roads, aqueducts, the Roman army, and their conquest of the Western world - all these accomplishments match a feeling of ego-confidence and a consciousness of personal power that the sixth grader has: I can do anything! Yet equally important for the children is the example of how the excesses of the Roman period led to the eradication of other cultures, the fall of the Roman empire, and the Dark Ages.

The world enlarges for the sixth grade child in the study of **Geography**. Following the consideration of basic physical configurations as part of the Geology unit, the study of specific geographic regions extends to Europe and Africa. The emphasis is on the interrelationship between the environment and traditional human cultures and ways of living.

English Language Arts. The law-abiding, rule-bound culture of Rome offers an instructive backdrop for the sixth grade child in developing his/her English language skills. The Latin roots of common words and expressions are explored. Conventions of composition and research are elaborated upon this year, and the fundamentals of scientific writing are introduced to coincide with the science main lesson units. Formal grammar rules are also dealt with in greater detail. The beauty and order of calligraphy makes it another appropriate skill to be introduced in the sixth grade.

Grade 6 Curriculum Components

- **Math:** Introduction to Algebra; ratios; proportions; geometric formula and drawing with instruments; continuation of fractions, percentages, decimals
- **Language Arts:** Dictation; composition; spelling; Latin and Greek roots, etymology; biographies; mythological literature; drama
- **Science:** Mineralogy; introduction to physics: acoustics, electricity, magnetism, optics, heat; geocentric astronomy
- **History & Social Studies:** Roman and Medieval history; projects and reports
- **Geography:** European and African geography
- **Handwork:** Hand sewing three-dimensional animals with gussets, pattern making
- **Woodworking:** Concavity and Construction: spoon, letter opener, jointed toy
- **Foreign Language:** Continuing foreign language study with grammar work, historical and cultural studies, poetry, music, plays
- **Visual & Performing Arts:** Calligraphy; painting; clay modeling; mosaics; drama; choir; recorder; instrumental ensemble
- **Movement/Physical Education/Games:** Introduction to competitive games; more formal movement skills; complex strategy; calisthenics