

# THE DALTON SCHOOL

## *Sixth Grade Guide*

**An Introduction to Core  
2003 - 2004**

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### **Welcome to the Sixth Grade!**

**This booklet is your guide to the year ahead.**

Included in this booklet, you will find information on  
Core scheduling, academic courses,  
extra-curricular activities and other important  
elements of your Sixth Grade experience.  
Sixth Grade will be very different from your  
previous Middle School years,  
so read this booklet carefully with your parents.

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# The Sixth Grade Curriculum

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## THE CORE CURRICULUM

Dalton's Sixth, Seventh and Eighth grade instruction revolves around a **Core Curriculum**. Sixth grade will be your introduction to the concept of Core. All the students in each grade are divided into **two Cores** to study Social Studies, English and Math. Three teachers serve as House Advisors for a specific Core in each grade. These three teachers generally teach their advisees the three subject areas. The first day of school, students will receive an individualized schedule outlining each scheduled class, the time, the name of the teacher and the room number. This schedule is the key to the Core.

The Core Curriculum in sixth grade is based upon the study of the beginnings of our western traditions in Greece, the Middle East and Western Europe.

**Social Studies.** The Sixth Grade Social Studies curriculum could easily be called "The Student as Historian" because it revolves around teaching the student the nature of historical inquiry and enabling the student to take on the role of historian. We study the important although minor kingdoms of the Levant during the Iron Age including the Hebrews, their archenemies, the Philistines and the Phoenicians, authors of our own alphabet. The young historian, turned archaeologist, then begins a simulated excavation of a provincial Assyrian site where materials from the petty kingdoms of the Levant will be found. The Greek world opens to the student with tales from Homer and Hesiod followed by an excursion into the land of philosophy with a study of the Ionian natural scientists. Classical Greece follows with a second excavation exhibiting sculpture, architecture, painting, armour and fragments of the speeches of great philosophers and statesmen. The year ends with an exploration of "Rome, the Model Empire." Students construct ancient monuments in order to better understand how Rome unified the cultures of those peoples living in the areas from the Persian Gulf to the south of Scotland. Many of these buildings and monuments will be reused in the new vocabulary developed by the Christians before 500 AD. **Social Studies meets five times each week.**

**English.** Students in English not only learn the necessary skills of grammar, spelling and vocabulary, they also learn to read great literature with a discerning eye incorporating personal literary analysis. The Sixth Grade program is literature-based and writing and reading skills are coordinated with specific texts. Students read and discuss literature and are expected to respond to the material through creative and analytical writing. Each student assignment and response to the reading involves class discussion, a number of short responses, and a culminating longer piece. Incorporated into the writing curriculum is a review of paragraph structure with emphasis on learning how to effectively use quotations for supporting textual evidence. Students then move on to becoming familiar with the longer form of a five-paragraph essay to respond to questions about their reading. This process helps the student to analyze and synthesize the material and maximize its understanding. Research projects are also interwoven into some assignments.

The units of the course center on particular literary genres and some of the themes they incorporate. The genres include tales, narrative poetry, Greek mythology, a novel and a play. Students discuss poetic devices and incorporate them into their own narrative poems. Samples of the literature within these genres that Sixth Grade students have studied in the past include: The *Oresteia*, narrative poetry, The Children's *Homer*, plays such as *Inherit the Wind* and as an introduction to Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*. In addition to the literature, there is a comprehensive skills program that focuses on the enlargement of the students' vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. The skills program is integrated into the students' study of the literature and helps to solidify understanding and comprehension. Students are expected to be reading a steady selection of books outside of the classroom. **English meets five times each week.**

**Mathematics.** The Sixth Grade Mathematics program includes non-routine problem solving, group learning, investigations and explorations, familiarity with graphs and charts, and what is traditionally called a Pre-Algebra course. The Sixth Grade Curriculum marks a transitional moment between the concrete arithmetical work that absorbed students in Fifth Grade and the more abstract conceptual work presented in the Seventh and Eighth grades. This Pre-Algebra course utilizes a curriculum that recognizes the importance of abstract analytical training and the necessary arithmetic skills, both of which are essential for a solid foundation in mathematics. Throughout the year, students are given the opportunity to apply their knowledge of mathematical properties and their mathematical reasoning to multidisciplinary projects, thus streng-

thening the learned concepts. Concurrent with the social studies unit of the Greek world, students research and build Greek temples to scale in math class. They incorporate technology into their work by combining the Excel graphing program into their study of data collection and display. Additionally, the students incorporate their mathematical concepts and reasoning into real life situations including: the simulation of buying and selling stocks and working within a budget and using the newspaper and Internet to research possible jobs and locate places to live. **Math meets five times each week.**

Integration across the curriculum occurs in many ways, especially when students study the objects found during the Greek excavation and research and build scale models of Greek Temples in math class. Students also study Greek plays as they excavate. Similar integration occurs when students use graphing skills developed in math class to plot and interpret temperature curves in science experiments.

## **SCIENCE**

Science in the Sixth Grade is founded on the Investigation-Colloquium Method. Students carry out experiments and investigations, note their observations, and then discuss the evidence and construct hypotheses. The teacher's role is one of an advisor and guide. Students work much as scientists do, and arrive at their own explanations for phenomena, learning science in a vibrant first-hand way. **Science meets four times a week.**

## **FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

Beginning encounters with Language Studies at Dalton is designed to be an exciting time for the children. In the sixth grade, students have the opportunity to continue their formal studies in French, Spanish, Greek (dependent upon enrollment) or Latin, or they may be enrolled in English Workshop. Students are introduced to language orally. They become familiar with the sounds as they hear them. Students learn vocabulary without having to write the words. Collaborative learning is emphasized and students learn how to listen to each other, keep their attention focused and work in pairs or in small groups. After a few weeks the students are able to carry on conversations with each other, pertaining to themselves and their surroundings.

Students are provided textbooks and a workbooks. Daily homework (which may be vocabulary exercises and/or written activities) provides vital practice. Students must review vocabulary every night in order to participate actively in class. It will be important to schedule labs with language teachers to assist language learning. Students are encouraged to schedule a lab whenever necessary. Language teachers are always available to help students and they are located in the Language Lab on the 5th Floor. **Foreign Language meets four times a week.**

## **HOUSE**

House time is used in a variety of ways. It is a time for discussion about what it means to be a student and a member of the Dalton community. It is a time to talk about and act upon the Core Values of Respect, Responsibility, Compassion and Integrity, and to discuss issues related to becoming an active participant and educated member of the wider community of the world. It is a time to plan activities, to play constructive games, and to work and make labs with teachers. House is also a great place for students to gain a deeper sense of what it means to be in the Sixth Grade. As Sixth Graders, students will have new freedom, choices and responsibilities. Sixth Graders, like all other members of the community, are expected to be well-mannered, honest, kind, respectful and tolerant of other members of the community, whether those members are teachers, administrators, staff members, parents or other students. In House, as elsewhere, everyone works together to meet these expectations.

In House, students work with the House Advisor and are considered to be advisees. House Advisors play an important role in the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades. He or she is the person students should go to first with suggestions, comments, or any problems -- academic, social, behavioral, or even personal. Parents will also use the House Advisor as the first line of communication with the school. The House Advisor is the person who knows each advisee best and will help each advisee the most.

House is clearly outlined on each individualized student schedule. **There is a short, ten-minute House time at check-in and out each day. House also meets for one morning period each week, and one period after lunch each week.**

## LABS

Labs are an integral part of the upper Middle School Curriculum. **Each student has two lab periods each week. These periods are to be used for purposeful academic pursuit.** These pursuits include: research in the library, work of the student's own choosing, or work with (having a "lab" with) a teacher or House Advisor. Labs may be used for remediation or enrichment of the curriculum. Labs are indispensable to the development of self-discipline, independence, self motivation and maturity. Assistance will be provided to students so they may organize and use lab time constructively. However, it is the student's responsibility to schedule labs with teachers.

## COMPUTERS, THE DALTON NETWORK *and* YOU

The computer will continue to play a role in your education as you move through the sixth grade. Many of your sixth grade studies will require the use of computer programs and specialized computer applications developed at The Dalton School by Dalton faculty. You will also have access to the Dalton Network. The Dalton Network connects our community through the use of computers. Students, faculty, administration and staff have access to information on-line, to educational programs, community conferences and forums, and to an e-mail system that provides private mailboxes for users. Dalton users can access their accounts from any site on campus, as well as from home. Sixth grade students will have the ability to participate more actively on the Dalton Network and through the Forum. You will hear more about this in the Fall.

In sixth grade, you will be using **Archaeotype** in social studies and **Ecotype** (Dinosaur Canyon) in science. These educational programs were developed by Dalton faculty. Through the Archaeotype Program, you will study ancient Greek (and Assyrian) history by using observations of simulated archaeological digs to construct interpretations of the history of these sites, while drawing upon a wide variety of background information. Students work in groups around a graphic computer simulation of an archaeological excavation to "dig up" artifacts, measure them and in general make observations about them. In the Ecotype Program, you will work with a computer simulation of a geological section through a canyon by finding fossils and taking rock samples which are removed to a simulated laboratory for analysis. You will learn about the scientific method by sorting through and finding meaning in your discoveries. These are a few of the learning programs you will use as you explore ancient Greek history and the natural and physical sciences.

For many students, sixth grade access to Dalton's computer Network will be their first experience with on-line communication. Although the Network is designed for educational purposes, you will also be able to communicate with your friends using e-mail and message boards. You must think of the Network as an extension of the Dalton community. The Network is there to learn in, to work in and to help you communicate. If you wonder how you should conduct yourself when you are on-line, remember . . . "if you wouldn't do it in the Dalton community, don't do it in the Network environment"! Computers are powerful tools. Treat them and your Network friends with respect (see *Behavior Guidelines* in the *Student Handbook* or more details).

## THE GREEK FESTIVAL

After three thousand years, Greek myths still have the power to fascinate. Students read them eagerly because they capture the imagination by dealing with the problems common to all human beings. Myths remind us that human needs and the nature of man have not changed much over time. They focus on the extent to which man is a victim of circumstances and the extent to which he brings his destiny on himself.

The highlight of the combined English and Social Studies program of Greek literature and culture is the Greek Festival. Parents are invited to the Festival which takes place in April and is a presentation involving the dance, music, and English departments. After reading a variety of Greek myths and versions of the Iliad and the Odyssey, students in each English class will produce a play based on Greek mythology. Every student in Sixth Grade will be a performer in the plays and will make his or her own Greek costume with the assistance of their parents. In addition to the plays, students take part in dance presentations, perform with the chorus, or join an instrumental group.

After the plays, music, and dance performances, the entire Sixth Grade will join their parents for an evening of fun, food and entertainment, courtesy of the Greek Festival Parents Committee, the Sixth Grade PTA Parent Representatives and House Parents. Each Sixth Grade family will be asked to participate in planning the Greek Festival party.

The evening is a celebration of Greek mythology and history. Students and parents will share in an experience that is both entertaining and educational. The Greek festival is an exciting and pleasurable event for each and will be remembered fondly as the high point of sixth grade.

## The Sixth Grade Schedule

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### AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR CORE SCHEDULE

In the sixth grade, your entire schedule will be very different from the way it was in Fourth and Fifth grades. Each student has an individualized schedule of classes and rooms. **You will be given your individual schedule on the first day of school.** The general outline of the day is described below (see Figures 1 and 2).

Your day will begin with **check-in**. This will take place during House at 8:00am each morning in one of the classrooms upstairs. It is your responsibility to arrive at check-in on time, and it is very important that you do so. There you will have a ten-minute House period to hear the announcements of the day and to learn of any last-minute scheduling changes before heading to your first class. Check-in is also a good opportunity to speak with your House Advisor, should you need to do so.

Next comes **First Period**. First period every day is part of the **Outer Cycle**. The outer cycle includes the first and last periods of every day (the outside of the day). During the Outer Cycle, you will study **Science, Foreign Language, Music and Visual Arts**. Science and Foreign Language meet four periods each week, Art and Music meet for two periods each week, (except World Music which meets once each week). As you will note, each day of the week will be different for you in terms of your Outer Cycle classes. On one day of the week, for example, you might have Art, Music and Science, and on another day you might have Foreign Language, Science and Music. In addition to Outer Cycle, there is a period called **Inner Cycle** which is a band of time scheduled for either Language or Science. Having Outer and Inner Cycles provides adequate scheduling time for all of the cycle disciplines (Art, Language, Language and Science).

In addition to cycle disciplines, you will have two Outer Cycle **Lab Periods**. You will be informed as to where you must go during a lab period. As a Dalton student, you are expected to use these labs productively, working with your House Advisors, other teachers or students. Lab time is not a time to socialize with friends, but a time of study.

**Core Period** begins at 10:00a.m. (after second period) and continues until lunch-time (12:40pm). Core includes **English, Math** and **Social Studies**. There is no set schedule for Core subjects. Your schedule will be dependent upon decisions made by your Core Teachers and how they choose arrange their particular Core structure. At the beginning of the year, your House Advisor will provide you with your individual Core schedule and will tell you when and where to go to each subject.

After lunch, you will go to **Physical Education (PE)**. PE meets four times a week. Your PE period includes enough time for you to go on a bus to and from the facility located at E. 87th Street. During warm weather, you may be taken by bus to Randall's Island.

There is one other important and regularly scheduled part of your school life, and that is **House**. House meets once a week during second period (40 minutes), and once a week after lunch (70 minutes). House is a time for building school community, for discussion and sharing information. House is not a time to complete homework assignments or begin a new project. For part of the year, you will also have the opportunity to participate in **Dance** during House period. The schedule for Dance changes for each Sixth Grade House during the year so everyone will get a chance to experience dance for a given period of time.

After PE, you will go to your last period class which, as we discussed earlier, is part of the Outer Cycle. Last period classes begin at 2:30pm and end at 3:15pm.

**At 3:15pm you will be dismissed to House (Check-out) from the class you are attending. You must sign-out with your House Advisor (for safety reasons) before you leave the building. It is anticipated that you will move out of the building between 3:20pm and 3:25pm. Your parents or caregivers may wait for you outside the building. Many of you will travel home unescorted, which is the choice of your parents, guardians or caregivers. Busses will be waiting in front of the School for those who use private school busing.**

**Figure 1**

| <b><u>Overview of Your 6th Grade Schedule</u></b> |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b><u>Studies</u></b>                             | <b><u>Meeting Times per Week</u></b> |
| <b><u>Core</u></b>                                |                                      |
| English   | 5                                    |
| Math  | 5                                    |
| Social Studies                                    | 5                                    |
| <b><u>Outer Cycle (or Inner Cycle*)</u></b>       |                                      |
| Art   | 2                                    |
| Language  | 4                                    |
| Music   | 2                                    |
| Science   | 4                                    |
| <b><u>Other</u></b>                               |                                      |
| Dance   | 1**                                  |
| Physical Education (PE)                           | 4                                    |
| House   | 2***                                 |
| Labs  | 2                                    |

\* Inner Cycle is reserved for Science or Language  
\*\* Scheduled on a trimester basis for each House.  
\*\*\* In addition to the two scheduled House periods, House also meets for 10 minutes each morning and 5 minutes at check-out (3:20pm).

**Figure 2**

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

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### **MIDDLE SCHOOL GOVERNMENT**

The Middle School Government meets on Wednesday mornings at 7:30am in the Cafeteria. The government is made up of three Officers: the President; the Vice-President/Treasurer; and the Secretary. In addition to the Officers, there are two House Representatives from each Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade House .

The officers are elected by students in Grades 6-8 at an election assembly scheduled in the Fall. Sixth Graders may run for Secretary, but may not run for the other offices. House Representatives are elected in House after the election process for officers is concluded. Any student may run for House Representative.

The Student Government is moderated by two Faculty Advisors and the Dean of Students who work closely with the students. The Student Government helps to plan dances and other activities, runs the Spring Fair for the First Program, discusses issues such as Middle School rules, student suggestions and recommendations, and develops ideas for Assemblies.

### **CLUBS**

The Middle School has a number of clubs to which students are invited to join. Most clubs meet after school. Some of the clubs which are open to Sixth Graders are the Asian Cultures Club, the Environmental Club, the Literary Magazine, Human Rights, Animals Rights, and Community Service. An assembly will be scheduled in early Fall to provide you with more details about individual clubs.

### **PLAYS/MUSICAL THEATRE**

The production schedule varies from year to year, but there is one Middle School play or musical scheduled each year, usually performed in January. All productions are open to 6th, 7th and 8th graders who audition for a limited number of parts. However, there are many opportunities to participate "backstage", including lighting, set design, costuming and stage management. These productions are enjoyable and rewarding experiences for everyone.

## **SPORTS TEAMS**

There are several Sixth Grade sports teams you may consider joining and all students are welcome to try-out. Some of the sports offerings are: **Fall**--girls volleyball, soccer; boys football, soccer; **Winter**--girls and boys basketball; and **Spring**--girls track, softball; boys baseball. Everyone who tries out will play. The Physical Education Department will provide more details about teams and schedules at the Team Sports Orientation for parents, which is scheduled on Tuesday, September 9th (see the *Student Academic Calendar*).

## **Being An Effective and Productive Student**

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### **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN EFFECTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE STUDENT**

To accomplish the goals of each Assignment, you need to be well-organized and have a strong motivation to complete your work to the best of your ability. Below, there are some suggestions that, when acted upon, will help you to become a more successful learner. These suggestions help to reinforce both effective work and study habits. In 6th Grade, it is anticipated that you will learn to use a personal organization system. You may have begun to develop an organization system and this year it is time for you to refine the system that works for you. All Dalton teachers are committed to helping you make your system work, so feel free to ask for advice on how to organize your materials and your time. Each of your teachers will help you plan the most effective way to meet the goals, objectives and deadlines for each Assignment. Your responsibility, when you are experiencing difficulties, is to speak to your House Advisor, your Core teacher, a preceptor or your parents. You may also speak with brothers and sisters, friends, and classmates, or anyone who can help you learn to be a more effective and productive student.

## **ASSIGNMENTS, THE PLANBOOK, AND SUCCESS**

How do you look at the Assignment? How do you avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed? The following will help you to be successful.

**Use The Planbook.** Planbooks provide you with a weekly and monthly view of your academic work and it will help you to plan and organize your assignments. There are specific guidelines for using the Planbook and your House Advisor will instruct you in the type of planbook you will use and its proper use. Teachers will help you use the Planbook to organize your work by breaking down your assignments into sections, units, or smaller parts of the whole. Using a pencil, you will enter all the assignment due dates for all subjects and any dates for upcoming exams or quizzes. You will also enter all after school activities, lessons and evening appointments. You will plan and schedule your labs with the work you would like to accomplish in each lab and enter this information in the Planbook. The Planbook will also provide you with space to add important telephone numbers, and a phone book is included listing the numbers of the Middle School Administration and the students in your grade.

Having a complete and organized planbook is essential to your success in the Sixth Grade. You will learn to break down assignments into parts so that everything except printing, preparing covers, and stapling will be completed two days before the due date. These final elements will be completed on the night before the assignment is due. The aim of the Planbook and these suggestions is to allow you to relax and enjoy your work and hopefully ensure that you will have pleasant week-ends without feeling pressured or overworked.

**Use Strategies for Completing Your Work.** Before you begin an assignment, ask yourself the following and try to provide answers:

1. Have I scheduled my assignment appropriately in my Planbook?
2. What am I expected to do to complete this assignment?
3. What are the teacher's expectations?
4. How is this assignment related to what we are studying?
5. What are the different parts of the assignment?
6. What materials do I need?
7. How do I use these materials?
8. Who can help me with the assignment?

**Obtain and Use Materials/Supplies Required for 6th Grade.** The following supplies should be purchased prior to the first day of school.

**General Supplies for 6th Grade, Language Arts and Social Studies**

- 3 1-inch flexible 3-ring binders in 3 different colors (for English, SS, and Language/EW) **or** 1 large binder
  - 1 Package 3-hole looseleaf paper (lined)
  - 3 Composition books
  - 1 Box reinforcements
  - 3 Sets of dividers (with pockets, if possible)
  - 1 Pencil case or box
  - 1 Box #2 pencils (please sharpen at home)
  - 1 Box blue or black pens
  - 2 Highlighters (at least 2 different colors)
  - 1 Package 3 x 5 inch index cards, plain white and lined
  - 2 Packages Post-it notes
  - 2 Binder rings (for note cards)
  - 1 Bottle White-out or correction pen
  - 2 Computer disks (MAC Format) with carrying case (label with name)
  - 1 Lock for locker
- OPTIONAL: Set of colored pencils or markers

**Math**

- 1 Three subject spiral notebook with perforated edges **or** 1" binder with three dividers and folder with pocket
- 1 Pack graph paper
- 1 Folder with pockets

**\*Planbooks will be discussed with students the first week of school**

**LOCKERS**

You will be assigned a locker and you must provide a lock. **It is required that you use your locker and that you leave your backpack, textbooks and materials in your locker.** You will have 5 minutes transit time between each class, providing you the time to go to your locker and obtain the books and materials relevant to your upcoming class. (This rule is described in the *Behavioral Guidelines* in the *Student Handbook* and must be followed by each student.)

