

Making the Transition to Walton Middle School:



A Parent Guide 2015/2016

Welcome to Walton Middle School

5th Grade to 6th Grade Transition Booklet

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Introduction:

We look forward to meeting and working with the new sixth grade class at Walton Middle School! During the next three years we will work together to help you *stretch* your thinking, *develop* your study skills, and *grow* into outstanding students...ready to meet the challenges of high school. We want this to be a *shared* journey toward academic, social and physical *excellence* that prepares you to be life-long learners IN THE YEAR 2015 AND BEYOND!

Who We Are:

The transition from elementary school to middle school is an important one. While students and parents are sometimes worried about this transition, we find that with the right support, encouragement and attention, students (and parents/caregivers) thrive at Walton. As some of you may already know, the middle school years are some of the most exciting, challenging and (above all else) interesting for our children. These years are some of the most important in terms of growth and development. As with any type of development, there can sometimes be growing pains. By having supportive parents/caregivers, our children will finish these years stronger academically, socially and emotionally. As a school, we look forward to working together as a team in helping our children get the most out of their middle school years.



Mrs. Alison Dwier-Selden:
Walton Principal

Mr. Josh Walton
Walton Assistant Principal

In the Front Office:

Ms. Frances Wood: Office Associate
Ms. Lutrice Cooper-Simpson: Office Associate
Ms. Beki Thacker: Bookkeeper
Ms. Daniella Marden: School Nurse

In the Guidance Office:

Ms. Karen Collier: Office Associate
Ms. Makenzie Crawford: School Counselor, Testing Coordinator
Mr. Doug Bloor: School Counselor
Ms. Karen Ferrer: School Psychologist
Ms. Renee Lundgren: Family Support Worker

Twitter Feed: @WMSWildcatNews

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

- We expect students to report to class on time with appropriate materials and to contribute to a positive learning atmosphere.
- It is the student's responsibility to contact a classmate or arrange with his/her teachers to make up missed assignments due to absences.
- It is the student's responsibility to dress out consistently for PE classes.
- Each student is responsible for using the school's computer technology and internet access in an ethical, responsible and legal manner for school-related tasks only.
- Students are expected to remove trays and trash from their cafeteria tables.
- Each student is responsible for the care of his or her locker and all assigned textbooks.
- Each student is responsible for school property and maintaining school equipment and supplies.
- Hats cannot be worn inside the building.
- Respect people.



6th GRADE CLASSES:

Language Arts 6: Year-Long

Levels: Standard and Advanced

Sixth-grade students experience English language arts through exploration of communication and author's craft. This emphasis allows students to study those structures (systems) and styles (communication) that authors use to communicate ideas about the world. As such, students read extensively from a variety of genres, including fiction, narrative nonfiction, nonfiction, and poetry and transfer what they learn about those genres to their own writing and speaking. Students write for a variety of audiences and purposes, using narrative and expository forms. Additional emphasis is placed on continuing to build comprehension strategies, understanding Latin roots for vocabulary development, and using correct punctuation and grammar. A focus on systems reinforces students' developmental processes in word study and fluency and their continued growth as readers and writers. Each grade also uses a second concept as a focusing lens through which students gain deeper understanding of elements of language and literature. Additionally, courses are designed to incorporate a balanced literacy diet that includes the components of fluency, word study, comprehension, and writing.

Math 6: Year-Long

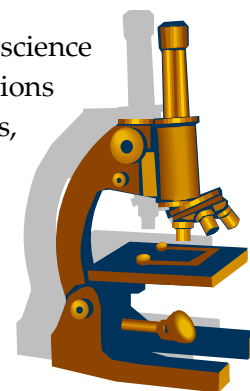
Levels: Standard, Advanced and Honors

Students in the middle grades use problem solving, mathematical communication, mathematical reasoning, connections, and representations to integrate understanding within this strand and across all the strands. Students in the middle grades focus on mastering rational numbers. Rational numbers play a critical role in the development of proportional reasoning and advanced mathematical thinking. The study of rational numbers builds on the

understanding of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals developed by students in the elementary grades. Proportional reasoning is the key to making connections to most middle school mathematics topics. Students develop an understanding of integers and rational numbers by using concrete, pictorial, and abstract representations. They learn how to use equivalent representations of fractions, decimals, and percents and recognize the advantages and disadvantages of each type of representation. Flexible thinking about rational-number representations is encouraged when students solve problems. Students develop an understanding of the properties of operations on real numbers through experiences with rational numbers and by applying the order of operations. Students use a variety of concrete, pictorial, and abstract representations to develop proportional reasoning skills. Ratios and proportions are a major focus of mathematics learning in the middle grades.

Science 6: Semester-Long

Sixth grade students focus on data analysis and experimentation in their science classes. They learn precise methods for testing the validity of their predictions and conclusions. Students study energy sources, transformations and uses, with emphasis on the role solar energy plays in driving most natural processes. They study basic chemistry such as the structure of the atom, elements and compounds and chemical formulas. Students learn about the properties of water, the natural and human interactions that affect watershed systems and the structure and dynamics of the Earth's atmosphere. They also study the solar system and natural resource management, particularly as it relates to public policy.



History 6: Semester-Long

Students use skills of historical and geographical analysis to explore the early history of the United States and understand ideas and events that strengthened the Union. The standards for this course relate to the history of the United States from pre-Columbian times until 1877. Students continue to learn fundamental concepts in civics, economics and geography as they study U.S. history in chronological sequence and learn about change and continuity in our history. They study documents and speeches that laid the foundation of American ideals and institutions, and examine the everyday life of people at different times in the country's history through the use of primary and secondary source documents. The study of history emphasizes the intellectual skills required for responsible citizenship.



YEAR-LONG ELECTIVES:

AVID: Advancement Via Individual Determination - AVID is a class for students who would like extra support in fulfilling a dream of going to college. It focuses on writing, inquiry, reading, and collaboration to prepare students for the required course load in high school. There is an application for the class. If you are interested, please see your guidance counselor.

Band and Advanced Band - Students who play band instruments receive sequential instruction on their instrument. They typically perform several formal concerts during the year and may participate in competitive district events, festivals, and parades. Advanced students should have participated in the 5th grade program.

Chorus – Students practice and perform choral literature drawn from a variety of musical styles and languages, including Latin. They may participate in festivals and district events beyond the school day. Selected advanced students may also participate in the County’s Honors Chorus program.

Strings - Students will learn to play a stringed instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass). Those who play stringed instruments receive sequential instruction. 6th graders are taught at a beginning level so anyone is encouraged to give it a try. Strings instruments typically perform several formal concerts during the year.

PE & HEALTH - 6th grade students participate in Physical Education / Health classes every other day for one block. Students will meet for PE & Health on the days they do NOT go to their elective classes. There are individual locker rooms for the girls and for the boys where students can change into their gym clothes. Students will have an opportunity to purchase a gym uniform during Walton’s Orientation in August or during the first week of school. Most students wear their own clothes from home during gym.



SEMESTER-BASED ELECTIVES:

Art - Art students at the 6th Grade develop a basic understanding of the elements and principles of art and design, and apply this understanding to a variety of projects. In one semester, we work with four basic materials. These are drawing (pencil/graphite, charcoal, pen), paint, printmaking, and clay (though sometimes other 3 dimensional/ sculptural media are substituted). Students study works of art of historical importance, as well as artist’s working in the present. This class can be fun, but it is sometimes work, so be prepared!

Drama - Drama students develop a variety of improvisational and more formal acting skills. Students learn fundamentals of stage design and presence, performing selected dramatic works

as a troupe. Emphasis is placed on gaining comfort in a variety of performance styles while building confidence in public communication skills.

Creative Design- Students will apply the engineering design process to solve real world problems. They will ermine and use manufacturing process, teamwork, and communication to design and create engineering/technology projects.

Music - Students will explore vocal skills necessary for singing and speaking, learn basic acting skills, examine elements of their culture through music, currently observe our current music. This is NOT a performance class.

Programming and Coding- Students will learn how computers work and will practice computational thinking as they code computer programs to display graphics, design interactive stories, create games, and animate objects. Topics will includes sequential logic, conditioanls, loops, and variables.

Spanish 6 - Coursework includes a strong emphasis on speaking, listening, reading, writing, and cultural awareness. Basic vocabulary and essential grammar are taught. Participation in the grade 6 world languages courses is open to all students and a good way to explore various cultures and make decisions about taking future world language courses.

INFORMATION ABOUT WALTON CLASSES:

- 6th grade core classes are all 80 minutes long.
- Core classes meet every single day, no matter the color of the day.
- Science and History are semester-based classes. Students will have one class first semester and one class the second semester.
- PE and Health meets every other day.
- Students will take their electives opposite PE/Health during 2nd block.
- Walton's school day starts at 9:00 AM.
- Students have 20 minutes for lunch. Students can bring lunch, buy a full lunch or buy part of a lunch – drinks, salad, fries or desserts.
- Students have a homeroom period each day where they can complete work, see teachers, or work with peers.
- The school day ends at 4:00 – later than students are used to leaving school. It is important that students try to organize after-school activities and homework so that they do not feel stretched for time!



BLUE AND GOLD DAYS:

Walton's color system might seem a bit confusing at the beginning, but after the first week of school, students will get it straight. In 6th grade, it is pretty simple because the only classes that will switch every other day are PE and elective classes. Students will know which class to go to

because there will be either a “B” (BLUE) or “G” (GOLD) written next to those classes on their schedule. Students will be taking Language Arts, Math and either Science or Social Studies (one of these per semester) EVERYDAY for one block. We also have the color of the day posted on the school’s website and either a black or teal flag flying above the Main Office doors.

GRADING SCALE:

A: 100 – 90 B: 90 – 80 C: 80 – 70 D: 70 – 60

SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Blue Day | Gold Day |
| Language Arts | Language Arts |
| PE/Health | Band |
| Science | Art |
| Math | Science |
| | Math |

PARENT TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL START:

- If you have not done so with your elementary school, sign up for Parent Portal. Grades and student attendance are always viewable online with this website. We also run our progress reports through Parent Portal every 4.5 weeks.
- Bring your child to the middle school during the summer to help them get comfortable with the building. Older siblings or friends can guide them through the building, pointing out classrooms, the Library, Gym and the Cafeteria.
- Encourage your child to participate in clubs/activities.
- Buy a combination lock for your child and have them learn how to use it before the school year begins. Practice using the lock over the summer to familiarize how to use the lock and combination.
- Create a consistent supervised study time for your child. Establish a study area that can be monitored.
- Encourage your child to ask for extra help when needed.
- Check in periodically about your child’s progress.
- Allow your child to gain a sense of independence and responsibility.
- Encourage your child to practice good hygiene.
- Have your child “pack” up for school before going to bed. It will make things easier in the morning.
- Stay in communication with your child’s teachers through phone, email and your child’s agenda.
- Finally, DON’T forget that your child is young and there will be bumps in the road. Mistakes will be made-- but it’s all a part of the learning process.



RECORDING AND ORGANIZING ASSIGNMENTS:

The student agenda is a basic organization tool in which students record both daily and long-term assignments. In addition to recording assignments, the agenda can be used to help parents monitor their child's work and communicate with teachers. Students with poor study habits are often inaccurate when recording assignments – leaving out important details. Some students choose to rely on their memories, write assignments down in a number of different locations, or resist using the planner completely. Unfortunately, this lack of organization often leads to “forgotten” and late assignments or assignments that do not meet the teacher's directions resulting in poor grades. Here are a few tips regarding the agenda:

- Consistent use of the daily assignment planner is the first step toward being successful. Your child needs to neatly record all homework -- including quiz and test dates in their assignment planner.
- Check your child's assignment planner each evening to see that homework is written accurately and completely. The word “none” should be written next to a subject that has no homework.
- Verify that assignments are completed each day.
- Insist that your child bring home all of his/her assignments to show you that they have been completed.
- To help keep a record of completed assignments encourage your child to use a bright colored pen or marker to place a checkmark (√) or a diagonal line (/) across the assignments in their planner indicating that it has been completed. Make sure that they place the assignments in their appropriate folder and finally in their book bag.
- When your child has turned in an assignment or the teacher has recorded it as completed, instruct them to place a circle around the checkmark or make a second diagonal line (\) (creating an X) over the assignment.

ESTABLISH A STUDY TIME:

- Discuss and establish with your child the time of day/evening that will be set aside for homework. Late afternoon and early evening are the best times. The time should be consistent each day and supervised by an adult.
- Decide with your child where he/she will study. Establish a comfortable place with few distractions. It should have good lighting and be away from outside noises and disturbances. It needs to be a television/telephone free time.
- Discuss with your child the length of time that is to be set aside for homework. It should correspond to your child's age and grade level. The average student at Walton has approximately 1 to 1½ hours per night. This, of course, is an estimate and your child

needs to understand that the actual time to complete assignments will vary each day based on assignments and scheduled tests.

- Plan for study breaks.
- Do not allow this study time to be the source of a power struggle. Make it clear that school is your child's responsibility.
- Once study time is completed, allow your child the opportunity to enjoy leisure activities.

ADDITIONAL WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD TO BE SUCCESSFUL:

- Ask your child to find a "study buddy" for each of their classes who will collect work when your child is absent and with whom they can review notes, study, and share information.
- Encourage your child to participate in class discussions and ask questions. If they are uncomfortable asking questions during the class, encourage them to see the teacher at the end of the period or after school.
- Don't hesitate to contact your child's teachers or the school counselor with any questions that you have regarding your child's adjustment and progress in school.
- Sign up for "Wildcat Weekly". This email services is a great way to stay connected with important information about Walton.
- Check the school website. With our school Twitter Feed, the Wildcat Blog, and the daily announcements; the website is a great way to keep up with the day to day activities at WMS.

SUPPLIES:

The school supplies needed for Walton are not much different than what students used in fifth grade. Here are the basic supplies you will need:

- An agenda to keep track of assignments
- Several pencils and pens
- A STURDY 3-ring binder
- Wide-ruled loose-leaf paper
- A sturdy bag to carry your materials to and from school! (You will not be able to carry your backpack during the school day, but you have plenty of time to go to your locker in-between classes.)

You will receive more complete supply lists from your individual teachers during orientation in August.

THE BUS:

The majority of students coming to Walton ride the bus to and from school each day. Pick-up and drop-off points should be sent to you by the ACPS Transportation Department. Busses begin to arrive at Walton at 8:50 AM.



Please note that students who are not riding the bus are asked to be picked up in the pull off to the right of the main building. This is done so we can allow our busses easy and safe access out of the parking lot. We ask that parents refrain from using the main parking lots as a drop off/pick-up location as students have to cross the bus lane in order to get to the parking lot. Please do not pull in to the front of the school until after the busses have cleared the area.

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH:

After busses release students, your child may purchase breakfast near the Main Office. Students are allowed to bring breakfast to their classrooms and eat during Morning Announcements. For lunch, all 6th grade students eat together in the cafeteria. There are many different healthy food options available to them from the hot meal option of the day to a la carte items like individual salads, snack items and beverages. Students have the option of bringing their lunch to school. We have microwaves located in the cafeteria for student use. We use assigned seating at lunch for the first week of school. After the first week, students may eat at whichever table they choose. Student lunch numbers carry over from their elementary schools, so there is no need to learn a new account number. Students will use the same 5-digit pin when ordering lunch or breakfast.



Activity Day Schedule:

Once every four weeks, Fridays are a little different at Walton. Classes are shortened by a few minutes. From 3:15 - 4 PM, we have an Activity period. This is a time reserved for you to choose to participate in an activity, game or sport. We also have individual clubs that will sell items to eat and drink at the start of activity period.



WMS ACTIVITIES:

Students may choose to participate in some of the activities at Walton. In addition to Electives, you might think about these...

ACADEMIC GROUPS AND CONTESTS – We have students who participate in Destination Imagination, National History Day, The Walton Film Festival, WMS Science Fair, the Stock Market Game, Model UN, and the National Geographic Geography Bee held locally each year. There are also opportunities to enter writing and art contests. Parents can check the “Daily Announcements” portion of our website for information on how to participate in these as well as other academic field trips.

DANCES – We will have several scheduled dances during the school year – almost one per month – that are open to all Walton students. Dances are held after school in the cafeteria from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. Students must be picked up by a parent or adult when the dance ends.

STUDENT COUNCIL ASSOCIATION – All Walton students are eligible to join the Student Council Association (SCA). The purpose of this organization is to assist in the orderly operation of the school, to help improve the school and to develop leadership and responsibility in our students. The SCA sponsors many activities for students and faculty members including dances, Spirit Week and community service projects. In addition, the SCA works diligently throughout the year on anti-bullying campaigns, food drives and creating a positive, caring school environment. SCA members are often used as student ambassadors for new student orientations.

The SCA has officers elected by the students at the end of each school year. These officers include President, Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Sixth graders may not run for office, but may serve as a representative once the new year begins. SCA representatives will attend all SCA meetings and provide information from the meetings in their homerooms. We urge our students to participate in SCA activities.

CLUBS – Walton provides opportunities to participate in clubs such as WLHW News, Cupcake Decorating Club, Guitar Club, Chess Club, and Robotics Club. Other clubs may be offered based on student interest. Clubs typically run for several months and then reset so new offerings can take place.



WHAT ARE YOUR KIDS WORRIED ABOUT?

Every year we find that kids worry about the *same things*. What we want to tell you is: **DON'T WORRY!** We've already taken care of most of the things you worry about....



1. **LOCKERS** – Yes, it may take a while to learn to open them quickly, but the 6th grade teachers provide extra time during the first week of school to learn and remember combinations.

2. **GETTING TO THE RIGHT CLASSES** – Moving from class to class throughout the day is a big switch! Students can “walk through your schedule” at the August orientation before the first day of school. Also, during the first couple of weeks of school, teachers will help students get used to the building, lockers and classmates. They will walk your children through their schedules, too. After a few days, students will have no problem getting where they need to go within three minutes.

3. **DRESSING OUT IN P.E.** – We no longer have gym uniforms for students, so we require all students bring a change of clothes on PE days so they won't get their regular clothes sweaty. Dressing out becomes second nature in no time. Students will be assigned a gym locker with a combination lock to keep all of their belongings safe. Your child's PE teacher will answer your questions early in the school year. PE teachers can also help answer questions about sports opportunities in the area. It is recommended that 6th grade parents remind their students to empty their gym lockers once a week and bring all gym clothes home.



4. **DISCIPLINE REFERRALS** – Discipline referrals are given for not following rules that apply to all students in the building. Teachers will explain the classroom expectations at the beginning of the year and how “timeouts” and discipline referrals work.

5. **BIG KIDS** – Some people worry about traveling in the halls with 8th graders. The 6th grade classrooms are grouped together in a separate hall so you only have to travel in the rest of the school during PE/exploratory classes. Students in the 6th grade will have little contact with 7th and 8th graders during the school day. When they do, you'll find Walton students to be considerate and helpful.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP:

Making the switch to middle school is **EXCITING**, but a little **SCARY** at the same time...**IT'S A BIG SWITCH!** There are a lot of people to help you if you have questions or concerns:

- **YOUR TEACHERS** can answer many of your questions about how things work at Walton or who to go to for help. *Any teacher can help you if you are having problems.*
- **YOUR 6TH GRADE SCHOOL COUNSELORS**, Ms. Crawford and Mr. Bloor, are here to help you get adjusted to middle school. Ms. Crawford and Mr. Bloor can help you with problems or concerns you may have. You may make an appointment to see your counselor through the Guidance Office.
- **YOUR ADMINISTRATORS**, Mrs. Dwier-Selden and Mr. Walton can talk to you about concerns you have. They also like to hear about good ideas you might have for Walton.
- **RESOURCE TEACHERS** are available for students with learning disabilities or emotional difficulties. They have small class sizes to help students succeed in school. Albemarle County may also provide - as appropriate - support from specialists, such as a School Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist, Occupational Therapist, and/or a Physical Therapist.



PARENTS may call the Main Office to let us know you are going to be absent and get homework assignments if you are out of school for two consecutive days. Requests for homework must be in by 9:30 AM in order to allow teachers to gather work. Parents may call Guidance if they would like to set up a meeting with their child's teachers. We also will have scheduled conference days during the school year.

REMEMBER, WE ARE ALL HERE TO HELP. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS AND HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR TIME AT WALTON MIDDLE SCHOOL!

Acronym Help List:

We use a great number of acronyms throughout the county. A few common terms to know as students come to Walton:

ACPS: Albemarle County Public Schools

COB: County Office Building

CTE: Career and Technical Education

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

FOCUS: Time-out room for students who need a chance to regroup.

GRT: Gifted Resource Teacher

IEP: Individualized Education Program

ISS: In-School Suspension

MAP Tests: Measures of Academic Progress test – given twice a year for reading and math

MHS: Monticello High School

OSS: Out of School Suspension

PLP: Personalized Learning Plan

QRI: Qualitative Reading Inventory. An assessment used to determine a reader's competence with word recognition in isolation and in context, fluency, and comprehension.

RTI: Response to Intervention

SBIT: School-Based Intervention Team

SOL: Standards of Learning tests

SRI Score: Scholastic Reading Inventory - a reading assessment which provides data on students' reading levels and growth over time.

VICAP: Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program

WMS: Walton Middle School

