



Middlesex Middle School

Mrs. Kate Dimoulas
Principal
kdimoulas@darienps.org
ext. 3226

Dr. Felicia Bellows
Asst. Principal (gr. 8)
fbellows@darienps.org
ext. 3371

Mr. Tim Monahan
Asst. Principal (gr. 7)
tmonahan@darienps.org
ext. 3298

Dr. Caitlin O'Keefe
Asst. Principal (gr. 6)
cokeefe@darienps.org
ext. 3221

Ms. Sarah Ramaley
Dir. of Special Education 6-8
sramaley@darienps.org
ext. 3281

January 8, 2026

Dear Fifth Grade Families:

I hope this communication finds you well, having enjoyed a healthy and joyful holiday season and new year celebration. As 2026 begins, so begins the calendar year we will get to welcome your fifth grader(s) to Middlesex Middle School! The transition to sixth grade is an exciting one, and we hope you will join us for a **Parent Orientation & MMS Curriculum Night on Tuesday, February 10 at 6:00 pm** in the Middlesex Auditorium. At this time, we will share information about the sixth grade experience, including the team model, courses, and the transition process. You will get to meet Dr. Felicia Bellows, Assistant Principal, and School Counselors Greg Carnevali and Jackie Petrasanta, who will work with the incoming grade for their three years at MMS. After hearing from our Department Chairpersons and Coordinators about the sixth grade programming, we will overview the scheduling process.

A typical sixth grade program includes Reading, Writing, Math, Social Studies, Science, as well as a World Language course, Music course, and PE. As you can imagine, the scheduling process is complex, so we do not honor requests for teachers or teams. Following this letter, you will find information about the World Language and Music choices for sixth grade students at MMS. Your child(ren) will also learn about these choices in the coming weeks; please review this information with your child(ren) and submit your child(ren)'s selections to [Course Selection GoogleForm](#) by March 2. For Math, Math Department Chairperson Roni Rodier will provide a brief overview of the courses, placement process, and waiver process during our February 10 curriculum presentation, in addition to offering a more detailed virtual presentation on the evening of February 24 (flyer attached). Communication about your child's recommended math course will come via Aspen in March. A detailed explanation about the math transition for grade 5 to 6 can be [found here](#).

We are in the process of coordinating two transition experiences for our incoming students. We will be welcoming fifth graders to MMS on January 27 for a preview of our

musical production, *Bye Bye Birdie!* During the subsequent spring orientation, current DPS fifth graders will tour MMS, meet some of our important school faculty, and hear from current students. Each elementary school will visit MMS the week of April 6, as follows:

- Monday, April 6: Hindley
- Tuesday, April 7: Tokeneke
- Wednesday, April 8: Holmes
- Thursday, April 9: Ox Ridge
- Friday, April 10: Royle

The developmental transformation that middle schoolers experience as they journey from childhood to adolescence is complex and beautiful. Fostering a strong school culture and community relationships is critical to nurturing our students through that journey. We have exciting work ahead, and I am looking forward to partnering with each of you to support a positive and impactful middle school experience for your child(ren). I hope to see you on February 10!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kate Dimoulas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Dimoulas (she/her/hers)

Middlesex Middle School Principal

2026-2027 6th Grade Music & World Language Course Offerings

Grade 6 Music Course Descriptions

Students in 6th grade have the opportunity to choose between several options to continue their music education. Students who are currently enrolled in a performance ensemble are highly encouraged to continue with their instrument into sixth grade. Questions about the MMS grade 6 music program should be directed to Director of Visual Art and Music, Colleen Thompson, at cthompson@darienps.org

6th Grade Band is a continuation of the 4th and 5th grade instrumental program. Students who started playing a wind or percussion instrument in elementary school through the school instrumental program are encouraged to sign up for band in 6th grade. Students who did not play a band instrument in elementary school but wish to start playing should contact Colleen Thompson, Director of Visual Art and Music, to discuss enrolling.

6th Grade Orchestra is a continuation of the 3rd thru 5th grade string program. Students who started playing a string instrument in elementary school through the school string program are encouraged to sign up for orchestra in 6th grade. Students who did not play a string instrument in elementary school but wish to start playing should contact Colleen Thompson, Director of Visual Art and Music, to discuss enrolling.

6th Grade Chorus is a continuation of the elementary general music and chorus program. There is no prior singing experience necessary to join the 6th grade chorus. Students of all ability levels who are interested in group singing are encouraged to sign up for chorus in 6th grade.

6th Grade Music Explorations is a continuation of the elementary general music program. Units of study include music literacy and creation through music composition and introduction to basic music production, performance practice using guitars and keyboards, and connecting with music through the student of composers and musical innovations throughout history, and responding to music through listening journals.

Students in grade 6 will indicate their first and second choices for music class; students will have the opportunity to change their music selection in 7th grade if they are not scheduled for their first choice in grade 6.

In addition to the school day music classes listed above, there are extracurricular opportunities: Viva Voce, Rockestra, and Jazz Band are audition-based ensembles for students who wish to participate in an additional ensemble, who wish to participate in both vocal music and instrumental music, or play two instruments. More information

about auditions will be provided in the new school year. For more information about the transition between elementary and middle school music, please see the [Music 5-6 FAQs site here](#).

Grade 6 World Language Course Descriptions

World Language classes at MMS meet as a daily academic class. It is expected that students will remain in their chosen world language for their middle school tenure. Given the introductory nature of world language courses at MMS, students who study or speak Spanish, French, or Mandarin outside of school are encouraged to consider pursuing an alternate additional language; placement testing for advanced study is available at the high school level. Questions about the world language program should be directed to K-12 Curriculum Coordinator Scott Webster at swebster@darienps.org

Spanish 1 is designed for students that have studied Spanish in elementary school and who wish to further develop their proficiency. Students in Spanish 1 will further their speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills through the themes of education and school, families and communities, gastronomy, and contemporary life; students and their teacher speak Spanish 90% of the time in class. Students who successfully complete the three year Spanish sequence at MMS are generally prepared to enter Spanish 3 or Spanish 3 Honors at Darien High School.

French 1A is designed for students that want to begin their study of French at the secondary level; therefore, no prior language learning experience is necessary. Students will begin to communicate in French with their teachers and peers, developing their speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills through the themes of education and school, families and communities, gastronomy, and contemporary life. Students who successfully complete the three year French sequence at MMS are generally prepared to enter French 2 or French 2 Accelerated at Darien High School.

Mandarin 1A is designed for students who want to begin their study of Mandarin Chinese at the secondary level; therefore, no prior language experience is necessary. This first year course covers making introductions; students will be able to describe themselves, their family members, the town where they live, and their school community. They will be able to communicate personal interests and extracurricular activities, and identify the days of the week and times at which these activities occur. Students will begin to make connections between the daily life of a middle school student in China and the United States. They will identify tones, develop proper pronunciation, begin character writing, and be introduced to pinyin (the Romanization of Chinese characters). Students who successfully complete the three year Mandarin sequence at MMS are generally prepared to enter Mandarin 2 or Mandarin 2 Honors at Darien High School.

Questions about the World Language program should be directed to K-12 Curriculum Coordinator Scott Webster at swebster@darienps.org

[Complete the Course Selection GoogleForm by March 2](#)

Math Course Offerings & Placement Process

Save the Date: Feb 24, 2026 at 7PM for an online event focused on the 5th-6th Grade Math Transition. [Zoom Link](#).

In Grade 6, students are assigned to one of three math courses. Placement is determined using various criteria, with final notifications by May. The aim is to challenge each student appropriately based on their current developmental level, fostering reasoning, problem-solving, and computation skills in all courses.

6th Grade Math

On Grade Level

6th Gr. Advanced Math

**1 ½ Years of Content
Taught in One Year**

Prealgebra 6

**3 Years of Content Taught
in One Year**

6th Grade Math

Students are placed in this course following successful completion of the fifth-grade math curriculum.

6th Grade Advanced Math

6th Grade Advanced Math is an above-grade-level course. Units of study include all Grade 6 standards and approximately half of the Grade 7 standards. Major areas of focus include ratio and proportional reasoning, operations with fractions and integers, algebraic expressions, solving and graphing equations, and applying concepts related to area, surface area, and volume.

Criteria for Placement for 6th Grade Advanced Math:

- 5th Grade OLSAT Non-Verbal Scaled Score of **650 or higher**
- Midyear Curriculum Assessment score of **85% or higher**

- Consistent scores **above 86%** on 5th Grade Unit Exams

Parents may complete a waiver to request placement in this class.

Pre-Algebra 6

Pre-Algebra is a highly accelerated course that encompasses the equivalent of **three years of middle school mathematics** within one school year. Students develop skills in operations with integers, algebraic expressions, solving and graphing linear equations and inequalities, ratio and proportional reasoning, and geometric applications. They will also explore rational and irrational numbers, radicals and exponents, geometric figures, congruence, similarity, transformations, area, surface area, volume, and the Pythagorean Theorem.

Criteria for Placement:

- 5th Grade OLSAT Non-Verbal Scaled Score of **720 or higher**
- Midyear Curriculum Assessment score of **94% or higher**
- Consistent **SBA scores of 4 (Exceeds Expectations)**
- Consistent scores of **95% or higher** on Math in Focus Chapter Tests
- Evidence of exceptional math performance, including observations of reasoning, creativity, and higher-level thinking skills, as well as student work samples

Students must meet a **preponderance of the criteria** (at least four of the five) for placement into the Pre-Algebra course.

As we guide our fifth-grade students into middle school mathematics, we remain focused not only on academic readiness but also on supporting their **growth in maturity and independence**. Expectations and habits of strong math learners, along with placement flowcharts for all MMS math courses, are available on the [Math Department website](#). By emphasizing both academic and personal development, we can ensure a smooth and successful transition into middle school mathematics.

If you have any questions, please contact Roni Rodier, Math Chair, at rrodier@darienps.org