

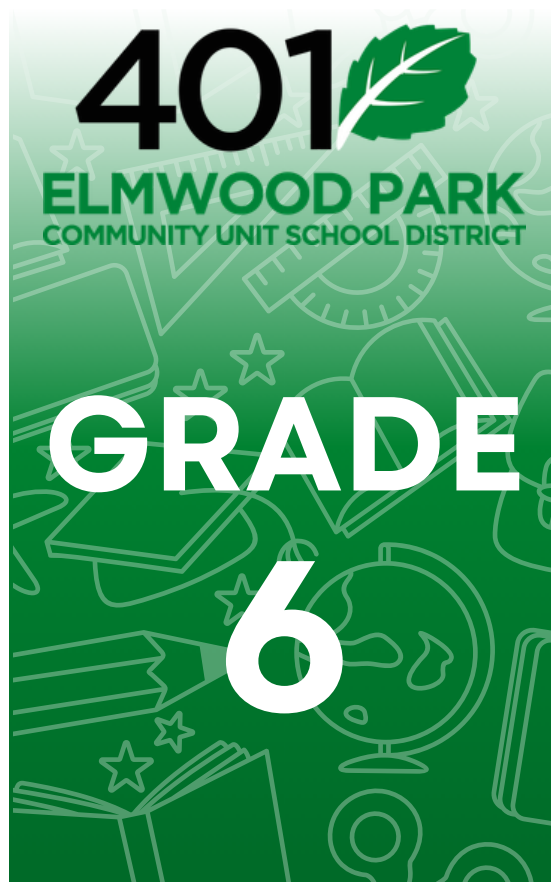
Family Guide to Support Learning

Parents and caregivers want their children to succeed in school, to be engaged and excited about learning; to build strong relationships with their teachers and peers; and to learn each year the knowledge and skills they need to be successful academically.

But it hasn't always been easy for parents and caregivers to figure out what children should know and be able to do by the end of each grade and how to discuss these topics with their children and their teachers.

This Family Guides takes the mystery out, and provide parents and caregivers with the information and tools they need to support their children academically in literacy and math, which are the building-block subjects for everything else.

With this guide, families can engage more deeply in their children's education, advocate for them, and build partnerships with their teachers, thus developing the strong bond between students, families, and teachers that ensures kids thrive.



- **What Your Child Should Know & Be Able to Do**
 - What experts say is the most important content (knowledge and skills) for students to learn by end of sixth grade.
- **Everyday Activities to Support Learning**
 - We've included some ways you can support your child in learning important content and skills in literacy and math.
- **Education Words**
 - Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Those words are bolded. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language.
- **Tips for Talking with Teachers**
 - How you and your child's teacher can work together to help your child grow.
- **Parent Guide and Success Video**
 - Review the Illinois Learning Standards and view success videos of what learning looks and sounds like.



WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, 6th Grade students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the school year.

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening:

- Reading grade level texts smoothly and with expression, at a fluency rate of around 110-160 words per minute by the end of the year.
- Asking and answering questions about stories and texts read independently. Summarizing what happened in what was read and citing specific evidence to show how they know. Questioning the author's or speaker's assumptions. Determining the accuracy of statements.
- Analyzing the author's specific word choice to understand how it impacts the meaning or tone of the text. Determining or clarifying the meaning of unknown words, synonyms, antonyms, and figures of speech (for example, "cause and effect," "part and whole," "item and category"). Determining or clarifying the meaning of words with similar, but not identical, meanings (for example, "stingy," "scrimping," "economical," "thrifty"). This can be done based on how they are used in context, through word relationships, or by using tools like dictionaries or glossaries.
- Making and justifying a claim or line of argument in writing or discussion. Supporting claims with precise and relevant evidence from credible sources.
- Showing something new they have learned from a text or about a topic. This can be in any form – speaking and conversation, letters, journals, stories, diagrams, reports, or essays – and should include sufficient additional detail that fits the form they have chosen.
- Writing in response to text, including an introduction and thesis statement; examples that are linked, logically ordered, and grouped; a conclusion; and mostly accurate spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

**TALKING ABOUT LITERACY WITH YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER**

- If your 6th grader's reading is choppy, or they sound out every word, fluency might be an issue. Have them practice reading and re-reading a poem, short story, or passage to focus on expression and rate.
- Turn on closed captioning while watching TV to allow your 6th grader to read along with the dialogue.
- Encourage your 6th grader to choose a book they want to read on their own each day. Reading lots of books over time is more important than the type of text. Let your child pick based on their interests and what makes them excited to read.
- Pick a topic to learn about together. Read books, look online, or do short research projects together. Ask what they learned in their reading. Have them share with you, with friends, or with other family members
- Encourage regular writing: keeping a journal, writing letters or emails, and/or taking notes on what they are learning. Encourage your 6th grader to write to you, and then write back to them.



MATHEMATICS



EdGemsMath

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, 6th Grade students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the school year.

- Understanding ratios and rates, and solving problems involving proportional relationships. (For example, “If it took 7 hours to mow 4 lawns, then at that rate, how many lawns could be mowed in 35 hours? At what rate were lawns being mowed?”)
- Dividing fractions and solving word problems related to dividing fractions. (For example, “You are making granola. One batch of granola requires $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of nuts. How many batches can be made with 4 cups of nuts?”)
- Using positive and negative numbers together to describe quantities. Understanding the ordering and absolute values of positive and negative numbers. Representing points in the coordinate plane that have positive and negative coordinates.
- Reading, writing, and manipulating algebra expressions by applying knowledge of how numbers work (for example, when adding numbers, the order doesn’t matter, so $x + y = y + x$). Emphasizing equivalent expressions and using properties of addition and multiplication to rewrite them (for example, $24x + 18y$ can be rewritten as $6(4x + 3y)$ or $y + y + y$ as $3y$).
- Understanding and using the process of solving simple equations (those with one unknown quantity or variable like $7x = 22$)
- Writing equations to solve word problems and describe relationships between quantities. (For example, the distance (D) traveled by a train over a period of time (T) might be expressed by an equation $D = 85T$, where D equals the distance in miles, and T equals the time in hours. This equation could be used to find the time required for the train to travel 100 miles or to find the distance the train would travel in 1.5 hours.)



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING WITH MATHEMATICS

- Encourage your 6th grader to talk to you about the math they feel they can successfully do. What new concepts are they learning? Where do they feel they need additional challenge and/or support?
- Help your 6th graders find resources that they feel are relevant and helpful. Suggest that they talk to their teachers about the resources, extensions, and practice activities they find.
- Have your child name topics of study that are directly relevant to their world. For example, in Grade 6, where do they see negative numbers besides their math materials?
- Encourage your 6th grader to think about questions and problems they would like to solve and how those connect to jobs they might like to have when they are an adult. Help them learn about how math is a part of these jobs.



EDUCATIONAL WORDS



Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language!

Absolute value

The distance a number is from zero. The symbol “|” is placed on either side of a number to mean absolute value, so we write $|-7| = 7$.

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that mean the opposite. “Big” and “little” are antonyms.

Coordinate plane

A coordinate plane is a two-dimensional plane formed by the intersection of a vertical number line called y-axis and a horizontal number line called x-axis. These are perpendicular lines that intersect each other at zero, and this point is called the origin.

Equivalent expressions

Equivalent expressions are expressions that work the same even though they look different. If two algebraic expressions are equivalent, then the two expressions have the same value when we plug in the same value(s) for the variable(s). For example, $2x + x + x$ is equivalent to $4x$.

Expression

Numbers, symbols, and operators (such as + and x) grouped together that show the value of something. For example, $y + 4$ is an expression, and $3 - x/2$ is also an expression.

Figures of speech

A figure of speech is a word or phrase meant to create meaning that is separate from the literal definition. A figure of speech might be used to describe, compare, exaggerate, or emphasize something to convey meaning.

Proportional relationships

A relationship between two varying quantities in which one quantity is a constant multiple of another quantity. For example, in an ant farm, the total number of legs is six times the total number of ants, so in an ant farm the number of legs is proportional to the number of ants.

Reading level

Teachers often determine the grade level at which a student is reading. But sometimes, students are then limited to reading texts at that level (typically a letter or number). This practice is one to be wary of, particularly if students are limited to reading only texts that are below the grade level goals.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that mean the same thing. “Big” and “enormous” are synonyms.

Thesis statement

A thesis statement is one or two sentences that summarize the paper's main point, main idea, or main message.



TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS

Literacy

- What are my 6th grader's strengths, and how do you use them in instruction?
- What topics are 6th graders learning about through reading? What should my 6th grader be able to understand, write, and talk about as a result of what they have read? Topics in history? Topics in science?
- Is my 6th grader able to speak and listen in class discussions and conversations in ways that show you they understand what they are reading and learning? Do they use evidence from the text, present their responses in detail, and speak with sufficient depth? If not, what challenges are they facing?
- What opportunities does my 6th grader have to choose books that interest them? Are they limited to a specific reading level or encouraged to select texts based on their interest, topics under study, or to build their knowledge of the world? How are you supporting any reading needs they have both within grade level text and with texts that they read on their own?
- Is my 6th grader able to write in ways that show you they understand what they are reading and learning? Are they able to use evidence from the text, present their responses in detail, and write with sufficient depth? Do they use conventions (spelling, punctuation, capitalization) and grammar rules appropriately? If not, what challenges are they facing? How can I help?

Math

- What topics are 6th graders learning about in math this year?
- Ask for specific updates on how your 6th grader is progressing in their understanding of the key content of the grade.
- What should my 6th grader be able to understand and talk about as a result of what they have learned?
- Is my 6th grader able to demonstrate to you that they understand what they are learning? If not, what challenges are they facing?

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS PARENT-GUIDE

This guide explains the Illinois Learning Standards your child will learn throughout the year and offers simple ways families can support learning at home. [6th Grade Parent Guide](#)

EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

See what success looks like by the end of the school year for Literacy and Math: [Middle School Success Video Clips](#)

