



# Welcome to 6th Grade!

2023/24

## Dear Future Graduating Class of 2030 and Families -

Welcome to the Secondary Program at Polaris K-12 School! Whether you are just joining our school or transitioning from our Elementary Program, we are so happy that you are here! We understand that you may have many questions about this transition. We have an experienced 6th Grade Transition Team ready to help both students and families start this next chapter equipped with knowledge and confidence. We look forward to working with you as you begin your journey!

### WHAT IS THE 6TH GRADE INTENSIVE?

Our Secondary students start the school year taking Intensives; a focused course on a specialized topic, for two weeks. All 6th Graders are automatically enrolled in the 6th Grade Intensive. This is such a gift of time! Two teachers in our 6th Grade Team work exclusively with students to build community, register for electives, learn the ropes, and have fun. Students also engage in a book study to help improve self-image, build friendships, resist peer pressure, set and achieve their goals, and be successful in a variety of settings. 6th Grade Intensive teachers will begin communicating prior to the first day of school.

### IS THERE A PARENT ORIENTATION?

Yes! We recognize that this is a big transition for parents too. You are invited to join us for an orientation and meet and greet with our 6th Grade Team on Thursday, August 24 at 5:30PM at Polaris.

### WHAT IS ADVISORY?

Secondary students are placed in a 6-12 Advisory Group with one facilitating teacher referred to as their Advisor. Advisory placements for 6th graders are based on enrollment numbers in current advisories. Effort is made to balance the gender, age, and overall make-up of the Advisory groups. Advisors strive to cultivate long-term relationships that support each student and their family as they move from 6th grade to graduation. Advisory serves as a home base for secondary students. It is where we look at scheduling,

community building, service learning, leadership, conferences, portfolios, and much more. Additional information about Advisory is found in our [Advisory Framework](#) under the SECONDARY tab on the website.

## WHAT SUPPLIES DO I NEED?

6<sup>th</sup> Grade students should be ready to start their classes, after intensives, with the basic supplies listed below. Advanced notice will be provided for any additional supplies that may be required for special projects throughout the year.

Pens/pencils (pencils only for Math)

Highlighters

Colored pencils

Math: Pocket folder to keep work in-progress and returned assignments

Science: Dedicated notebook (spiral or composition), pocket folder, black and red pens

Language Arts: pocket folder, creative writing journal, independent reading selection/book, college-ruled lined paper

Social Studies: composition notebook and a pocket folder

## HOW DO I BEST COMMUNICATE WITH TEACHERS?

Parent/Student Connect serves only as one tool and is a limited window into the classroom. It does not replace effective communication between student, teacher, and parents. Self-advocacy is a life skill.

Please encourage your child to have an open dialogue with their teachers and use StudentConnect. As a parent, if you have any further questions or concerns throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher either through email or setting up a time to meet in person.

ASD Email: [lastname\\_firstname@asdk12.org](mailto:lastname_firstname@asdk12.org)

Language Arts	Mindi Vogel	Social Studies	Allie Burris
Math	Heidi Postishek	Science	Jeffery Bevier
Band	Brad Hamilton	Orchestra	Adam Stewart
Art	Kelly Hebert	Physical Education	Greg Hobson Rachel Gregory
Hispanic Culture	Mira Starr	Introductory Drama	Mira Starr
Counselor	Susan Gullickson	Principal	Tia Clay

## How can I stay informed about what is happening in the school?

As a school community, we make every effort to communicate efficiently while reducing paper waste. The best source for current information and upcoming events is the school's website ([polaris.asdk12.org](http://polaris.asdk12.org)). You are encouraged to bookmark this site and check it regularly. Every Thursday, families will also receive a Wolf Weekly update via email. If you are not receiving these emails, please contact the front office.

## What does the 6th Grade Schedule look like?

The 6th Grade Schedule was designed with the specific developmental needs of 6<sup>th</sup> graders in mind. The schedule also allows for flexibility within the blocks for the Language Arts and Social Studies and the Math and Science teachers to collaborate and integrate learning.

6TH GRADE SAMPLE SCHEDULE		
Time	GRAY Blocks 1/3/5 Advisory & MS Learning Lab	GREEN Blocks 2/4/6 Advisory & MS Learning Lab
8:15 - 9:45	1: Core Class	2: Elective
9:50 - 11:20	3: Beginning Band or Orchestra	4: Core Class
11:20 - 12:00	Lunch	Lunch
12:00 - 1:30	5: Core Class	6: Core Class
1:35 - 2:05*	Advisory	Advisory
2:10 - 3:00	Middle School Learning Lab	Middle School Learning Lab

- High School students are dismissed daily at 2:05 PM
- Middle School students remain on-campus for lunch; 6th Graders eat in the MPR

## WHAT ARE CORE CLASSES?

English/Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science are referred to as the core classes. 6th Graders will automatically be enrolled in their core classes and schedules will be distributed and reviewed during the 6th Grade Intensive.

## HOW DO GRADES WORK?

The ASD Parent/StudentConnect System is where grades, schedules, and attendance is reported. If you need parent login information for ParentConnect, please see the front office staff. Students will be getting their StudentConnect login information during the intensive. Grades are a significant change for 6<sup>th</sup> graders. We will cover this extensively during the 6th Grade Intensive and continue working with students and families through the year. Parents should be available early on to provide support while their child practices taking increased responsibility. Core class teachers have adopted a minimum grading policy to best serve students.

## WHAT IS A MINIMUM GRADING POLICY?

Our grading uses calculations that are mathematically sound, easy to understand, and correctly describe a student's level of academic performance. As 6th Graders begin to negotiate the grading system, we have employed a research-based, minimum score policy in place of assigning zeros. If a student does not submit an assignment, they will receive a minimum 50% score placeholder, instead of a zero. A zero misrepresents the student's performance and renders the entire grade inaccurate. Instead of prompting greater effort, low grades more often cause students to withdraw from learning. We know that students are learning and growing in class each day, even if an assignment is not turned in.

A minimum 50% score does not indicate performance nor mastery, in fact, it is still below passing. This minimum score avoids lowering a grade so significantly that it may be difficult to recover. The intention is that the minimum score can help to motivate the student to complete the work. Minimum scores will be marked as "MISSING ASSIGNMENT" in the gradebook, to indicate that action should be taken and the assignment must be submitted in order to receive an accurate grade.

This should not be interpreted as leniency, but instead as an opportunity. A minimum score allows for grades that are more mathematically accurate; whereas a zero does not accurately report a student's knowledge.

## ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT?

All assignments that are designed and assigned are an important part of the course curriculum. Students are expected to complete each of those assignments. The natural consequence for not doing the work, should be doing the work. Not a zero.

In 6th grade, late work will be accepted without penalty; however, the most effective learning outcomes happen when students are working with and learning as a group. The last day of the quarter, four times each year, are hard deadlines. Other deadlines, such as the end of a unit, may also be established well in advance.

If understanding the topic or the directions of an assignment is a barrier to completion, students should talk with their teacher. We want to encourage students to communicate with their teachers right away if they need extra support. Opportunities for corrections and improved resubmissions may also be offered.

## WHAT MATH CLASS WILL I TAKE?

6th Graders are enrolled in Math 6. The Polaris Math Department works collaboratively to assess and meet the needs of every secondary student. Our intent is to provide opportunities for support, while also allowing a path for advanced students to accelerate. The ultimate goal is to ensure confidence in mathematics and that our students are both supported and challenged at each level.

## WHAT MUSIC CLASS WILL I TAKE?

During the 6th Grade Intensive you will meet our music directors. They will play a variety of instruments for you to both see and hear. It is a wonderful time to ask questions and learn about the instrument options available for 6th graders. You will then have some time to think about your choice and register for Beginning Band or Beginning Orchestra during the 6th Grade Intensive. You will not need an instrument before classes begin.

6th Graders are expected to practice their band/orchestra instruments a minimum of five days per week for approximately ten-minutes per day at home. This is the minimum expectation to see progress and to achieve the necessary performance skills required for successful end-of-the-year performances such as Sonic Boom.

## How do I make my Elective Choice?

During the 6th Grade Intensive, students will be able to prioritize their elective choices: physical education, art, Hispanic geography and culture, yoga and introductory drama.

## Will I have homework?

There will occasionally be assignments and tasks to be completed outside of class time. Homework may include work that was not completed during class time, projects, and studying. The intent is to help students develop strong study habits, practice time management, and gain independence. Homework should not regularly exceed one hour per evening.