

This guide provides an overview of what your child will be learning in **sixth grade**. It is based on the Common Core Standards, the Massachusetts Frameworks, and the curricular approaches which have been adopted by the Somerville Public Schools. Read the [Massachusetts Frameworks](#) for more details.

Academic standards are important. They ensure that all students, no matter where they start, are prepared for success in the next grade level, college, and their careers. By defining standards clearly, we aim to help families and teachers work together to ensure that students succeed. There are some students who will need additional support to meet a standard. Other students will need more complex work to go deeper with the standards. Teachers craft their day-to-day classroom instruction based on the standards, individual student needs, and the unique characters of their schools and community.

How can I support my child's learning at home?

- Talk to your child about what they are learning in school
- Contact your child's teacher with any questions or concerns and attend Parent Teacher Conferences
- Check your child's folder and/or agenda book every night
- Provide a space and a consistent time for your child to complete their homework

English Language Arts

In 6th grade, we use the Fishtank Curriculum for ELA. The guiding principles for Fishtank are:

- Building knowledge to nurture critical thinking.
- Centering diverse, relevant, and rigorous texts.
- Prioritizing student voices and ideas to build agency.
- Learning to write, writing to learn.

Unit 1: Finding Your Way

How do family dynamics shape a person's identity? How do personally and historically significant events shape the way a person sees the world? *Core Text: The Watsons Go to Birmingham 1963*

Unit 2: Challenging Authority

What is a utopia? What is a dystopia? Is it worth sacrificing knowledge and wisdom for a life of peace, contentment, and ease? *Core Text: The Giver*

Unit 3: Expressing Yourself: Women in the Arts

What can individuals achieve through self expression? How do female artists- specifically female artists of color- use art as a medium for empowerment?

Unit 5: Fleeing Conflict

How do people respond when they see others in need? How are individuals impacted by coming of age during times of crisis and war? *Core Texts: Refugee and The Unwanted*

Mathematics

In Grades K-8, we use the Illustrative Mathematics (IM) curriculum. IM Math is a problem-based core curriculum rooted in content and practice standards to foster learning and achievement for all. Students learn by doing math, solving problems in mathematical and real-world contexts, and constructing arguments using precise language. Information for families is available in both English and Spanish in the [Grade 6 Illustrative Math Information for Families](#).

Science, Technology, and Engineering

In 6th grade science, we use a curriculum called [STEMScopes](#), which is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards and the MA Curriculum Frameworks. The district is also piloting two other curriculum programs, [Amplify](#) and [Open Sci Ed](#), and considering plans for adoption in 2026-27.

Social Studies

Sixth grade students use the Investigating History curriculum. This is an inquiry based Massachusetts-specific curriculum. More information can be found [here](#).

Social/Emotional

The elementary years are an important time to nurture social-emotional competence and develop foundational learning skills. The Somerville Public Schools uses the Second Step curriculum, an evidence-based program that includes everything schools need to integrate social-emotional learning into their classrooms and school-wide. The curriculum is designed to promote school success, self-regulation, and a sense of safety and support.

Classroom teachers are responsible for implementing Second Step. Schools guidance counselors and other support personnel assist teachers and students to work toward attaining curriculum goals. Staff at your child's school can give you more detailed information about the sequence of skills taught and how social/emotional skills are taught.

Specialists

Somerville Public Schools provides each student with 40 minutes per week of instruction in General Music, Library/Media, Art, and Physical Education. The specialists at each school are available to give you more detailed information about specific skills addressed.