

This guide provides an overview of what your child will be learning in **eighth 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 8th 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: Facing Prejudice

How do race and racial bias shape a person's experience of the world?

Core text: All American Boys

Unit 2: Encountering Evil

Are human beings really good at heart? Why is it important to tell and listen to stories about the Holocaust?

Core texts: Night, Diary of Anne Frank

Unit 3: Abusing Power:

What is propaganda and how can it be used as a tool of social control? How have humans tried to solve the problem of inequality in society, and what were the results?

Core texts: Animal Farm, Wicked History

Unit 4: Surviving Repression

In what ways is coming of age universal, and in what ways is it shaped by a person's setting and circumstances? What tools do governments use to control and oppress people? How do people resist?

Core texts: Persepolis

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 8 Illustrative Math Information for Families](#).

Science, Technology, and Engineering

In 8th 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

In 8th Grade Social studies, students study the roots and foundations of U.S. democracy, how and why it has developed over time, and the role of individuals in maintaining a healthy democracy. They study these topics by exploring guiding questions such as, "How have concepts of liberty and justice affected the United States democratic system of government?" and "How can power be balanced in government?" Additional supporting questions appear under each topic. The questions are included to stimulate teachers' and students' own questions for discussion and research. The 8th grade year culminates with a civics action project that is done by all 8th grade students in Massachusetts.

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.