

## **COURSE OVERVIEW FOR 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE – 2009-2010 ACADEMIC YEAR**

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Language Arts**

Sixth grade students have begun the year in Language Arts with reading and discussion of Philip Pullman's novel The Golden Compass. The reading of this book will correspond with a trimester-long theme related to our study of the genres of fantasy and realistic fiction. Students will compare books they have read in these genres and determine commonalities of works within each genre. Students will ultimately write a paper answering the question "To which genre, realistic fiction or fantasy, does The Golden Compass actually belong?"

Reading will be an integral component of Language Arts. Students will be required to read for 25 minutes outside of school five days a week (students can decide which of the seven days of the week in which to do their reading). If something comes up which prevents a student from meeting this requirement, a parent can write a note to me explaining the circumstances. Assigned reading for the course will include The Golden Compass, which will be read by the entire class, a realistic fiction novel chosen to be read as part of a small group within the class, and a fantasy novel to be read individually. Aside from these requirements, students are free to read books of their choice for their independent reading.

Students will also do a substantial amount of writing in Language Arts. Students will work on both fictional and personal pieces of writing. They will also reflect on and analyze the literature they read in class in their writing. Students will work on creating drafts of their papers and on proofreading. We will cover writing conventions in class and we will have a special focus this year on spelling. To help facilitate their learning of how to proofread their work, I ask that students not use the spell check or grammar-check functions on their word processing programs at school or at home.

The last major focus of Language Arts this trimester will be the sharing of written work. Students will have opportunities to share their work with the class as a whole and in small groups. Students will both give and receive feedback related to writing done for class. This feedback will help give students new ideas for revising their work and the act of giving feedback will help them to begin to articulate ideas related to writing.

We're off to a great start and I very much look forward to working with our 6<sup>th</sup> grade class this year in Language Arts!

### **World Geography**

This year in World Geography we will cover the world region by region. Students will learn to identify countries, cities, physical features, and bodies of water on the world map. We will also study terminology, ideas, and themes important to geographers. Students will also choose one country to study in an in-depth manner over the course of the year. My goal for students is that by the end of the course they will have a high level of geographic literacy. Being literate in geography will enable students to discuss and understand world issues in an informed manner. It will prepare them for life in the interconnected world of the present and the future.

Students will have weekly geography quizzes. These quizzes will cover geographic locations and terms pertinent to the region we are studying at the time. Students will be able to work ahead so that they can take quizzes ahead of time and cover as much geography as they can over the course of the year. Students will need to practice throughout the week in

preparation for the Friday quiz. Because students have the opportunity to take the quiz before the actual quiz date, there will be no "re-do's" of quizzes after the actual quiz date.

In addition to learning geography, students will practice skills in writing, research, and critical thinking. Students will research the history and culture, in addition to the geography, of a particular country. They will create a travel portfolio for their country and design a hypothetical trip to that country. They will also identify a particular issue or problem facing their country and they will then weigh possible solutions to this problem. This latter portion of the country project will take place during the third trimester of Geography. Students will have to use all of the geography they have learned up until that point in the year. It will pose challenges to students, but students will learn a great deal about the complexities of the world in completing this project.

A year-long theme in Geography this year will be the effect of climate change on the planet's geography. This year negotiators from around the world will be meeting in Copenhagen in December for the United Nations Climate Change Conference. We will study some of the approaches taken by various countries to the threat and effects of climate change. We will also follow the actual deliberations of the conference itself. If you happen to have expertise in this area, please let me know; I would love to get input to help in my planning in preparation for the conference.

I look forward to studying World Geography with our great group of sixth grade students.

Mr. Gacek

## **6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE**

I am very excited about this year's Environmental Science class. We will be utilizing scientific inquiry methods to investigate our environment: air, water and the land. For each environmental state we will be studying its natural system and properties and then will be investigating how that system affects humans and is affected by humans. By tying our studies to the "human factor" the topics will relate more directly to the students and curiosity and engagement will follow. Each unit of study will be guided by an essential question and will include authentic research projects as a way to practice science skills such as observations, asking questions, designing experiments, using scientific equipment, data gathering and analysis.

As you may *or may not* know our Environmental Science class does not use a text book but instead uses a variety of readings taken from a number of books or other sources, labs and other activities to experience and learn about our environment. This gives us more flexibility to investigate concepts more closely and intimately and at our own pace.

Most of the work for Environmental Science class will be done in class rather than as homework. I plan to try and have the students be active with at least one lab type activity a week, if not more. Because of this, there will be times when lab reports/write ups will need to be finished at home, or there will be some assigned readings as well. A variety of assessments will be used to evaluate the student's understanding including; quizzes, lab write ups, and presentations.

The following is a general outline for the academic year and is subject to change if necessary.

### **First Trimester**

- What is science and science inquiry?
- Weather and Forecasting: Why is it so hard to predict NW weather?
- Climate: What is the difference between climate and weather?
- Climate Change: What are the signs that our global climate is changing and what can we do?
- The first trimester is geared to culminate in the study of global warming and coincides with the world Climate Conference in Copenhagen December 6-18, 2009 where 170 countries are expected to discuss the world climate with the goal of creating a "Copenhagen Protocol" to prevent global warming and climate changes.

### **Second Trimester**

- Waste and Waste Reduction: What is waste, where does it go and how can we reduce it?
- Field trip will be planned.
- Watersheds: What are the indicators of a healthy watershed?
- GIS Mapping
- Properties of water and the water cycle

### **Third Trimester**

- Plants: What would happen to the water cycle if plants weren't around?
- Terrestrial Ecosystems / NW Forest Ecology  
Field trip will be planned.
- Soil Biology: Why can't soil be called dirt?
- Estuaries and the Marine Environment: What's the big deal about estuaries anyway?  
Where does the water go?
- Field trip will be planned.

This **first** trimester will be dedicated to getting the students familiar with the scientific method, using and honing their inquiry skills to investigate their natural world, studying the difference between weather and climate, and ending with a unit on global climate change corresponding with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December 7-18, 2009. In Geography class, Mr. Gacek will also be integrating this conference into his class's study of the effects of climate change on the planet's physical geography. He and I will be working to tie in our two units together.

### **\*TRANSITION MATH**

Welcome to the world of Transition Math! It's important to realize that NOVA does not have a traditional 6<sup>th</sup> grade math program. We have students coming from a wide variety of math backgrounds, skill sets, and experiences and I strive to maintain a high level of difficulty while keeping mathematics accessible to all students. I design this course around their incoming needs by evaluating individual strengths and weaknesses, then customizing lessons to target specific growth areas within my broader goals for the class. In addition, I strive to build enjoyment and appreciation for math with the hope that each student will grow in confidence as the year progresses.

In any case, I would like to assure you that this class will be fast-paced, fun, interesting, occasionally stressful, and differentiated for each student. How it all fits together is the puzzle ...

**Units and Skills:** In order to get the students to a similar level of competency by the end of the school year, the Transition Math class is designed around the EALRs, the WASL, and the Washington K-12 standards. Our units cover statistics, decimals, negative integers,

fractions, ratios & proportions, percentages, geometry, and consumer math. Students learn to make sense of mathematics, be proficient with their basic skills, and use that math in their problem solving.

**Class Time:** Students should be excited to spend time in a learning environment among their math peers. Every day is spent doing something that involves using their math skills in a practical and/or creative way. All of the projects we do and games we play help students to understand how mathematics connects within mathematics, to other subject areas, and to the real world. Students will have the entire class time to ask questions, share ideas, and practice, practice, practice! Friday classes are special days spent with the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade in different interactive math situations.

**Homework:**

\*Students can expect math homework every night except Fridays. In general there will be 10 to 30 minutes of homework and parents should ask what the homework **IS**, not whether or not there is any. \*Students will move through the units at their own pace and will receive homework that reflects where they are and where they need practice in each particular unit.

\*Students should get in the habit of showing ALL steps involved when answering math problems; calculators are not allowed. The only way I can understand where a student is struggling and identify errors is to see the process the student has gone through to solve the problems. Any scratch paper should be attached to the homework and nothing should be erased. Homework without work shown (this is different than "showing your thinking") will be handed back to be redone.

\*Parents may certainly answer questions at home and suggest problems to redo, but please do not "correct" the homework at home before it is turned in.

**Grading:** Grading for Transition Math is pretty straightforward. Students are expected to maintain an average of 80% through homework, redoes, activities, and unit tests. The goal should be to reach the expected level of understanding the mathematics, but also to know what to do with what they know.

I hope that both students and parents will feel comfortable contacting me. The best way to reach me this year is by email: [Lmanning@novaschoo.org](mailto:Lmanning@novaschoo.org). However, if you would like to talk please call the school office and leave a message. I will get back to you at my earliest convenience, most likely in the early evening. I look forward to working with all of you!

Sincerely, Linda Manning – aka Mo

**BIENVENIDOS A LA CLASE DE ESPANOL!!**

I am looking forward to an exciting year of teaching Spanish at NOVA and to getting to know another great group of engaging and enthusiastic students!

This year we have 2 Advanced Spanish classes and 3 Regular Spanish classes which will meet two times a week. 6<sup>th</sup> Grade students will have an additional class on Tuesday mornings in order to learn some basics skills and to bring them up to speed with the returning students in the Regular Spanish class. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders have TPRS Spanish class on Monday mornings. (Ask your child what that means and to act out the vocabulary!)

All classes will focus on listening, reading, speaking, writing (and singing!) Spanish through individual, partner and group activities and assignments. Most of the class time will be conducted in Spanish. \*\*Homework can be expected to be given in all classes (the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Monday class and the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade Tuesday class will have homework from time to time)

and will be due the following class\*\* Please encourage your child to spend time reviewing the vocabulary and grammar concepts of the week and practicing speaking at home (even if no one else understands!) as the more time spent with the language, the more comfortable your child will feel in class and the more he/she will learn. Ask your child to teach you some Spanish! It is normal for beginners to feel frustrated and lost at first, but after a few months of repetition, they will begin to recognize and put together words and concepts in Spanish.

Grades will be given for written and oral assignments, quizzes, tests, projects and participation. Students are responsible for asking for the work missed while absent and will have as many days as were absent to make up the work. Late work may be handed in up to one week after the original due date but will only be worth ½ credit and must have the designated late slip signed by a parent attached to the assignment.

This year both Advanced and Regular classes will be working from the text book, Paso a Paso. We also have a video accompaniment to the book which will expose the students to various accents and idiomatic expressions. Students may check out the book at any time to make up class work or to practice at home. In the Regular Class we will begin the first trimester reviewing the classroom vocabulary, our class schedules and learning to tell time. In the Advanced Class we will begin by reviewing material, interviewing each other, writing acrostic poems with our Spanish names and writing and speaking about our summer vacations using the past tense. Both classes will study the vocabulary of the family in the first trimester. Throughout the year we will be learning about Latin American culture by studying and celebrating certain holidays. In November look for activities related to el Dia de Los Muertos. In the spring we will be preparing for and participating in the Mercado, an all school, all Spanish, marketplace simulation.

If you have a connection to the Spanish speaking world and would be willing to share information about life in a Spanish speaking country, would like to practice speaking Spanish with NOVA students, or would like to help out with the Mercado let me know.

I am looking forward to meeting the new families and to working with your exceptional children! I can be reached at school Monday-Friday or at home (956-2521) for questions, concerns, ideas about the class.

Con mucho carino,

Anne L. Weldon (Maestra)

### **\*P.E.**

Physical education at NOVA pushes students to be active and fully engaged. The rules of the games are adapted to fit the wide variety of skill levels, body sizes and strength, age, and experience. The games promote participation, cooperation, and exercise through activity. Team sizes are typically small (4 to 5 people) in order to emphasize the importance of each team member to the whole while encouraging individuals to step outside of their comfort zone and try new things in a safe environment. Students learn to be positive and patient problem solvers. Also importantly, students will have fun playing games with their friends while releasing all of that pent-up energy!

**Units:** We play variations of many traditional and some non-traditional sports, but essentially we cover the basic elements of base games, basket games, life sports (off-site

P.E. during winter term), net games, and field games. Within that framework our games utilize many basic, individual sport skills and typically emphasize the many facets of teamwork. We rarely play the same game twice in one year as there are just too many good variations to cover.

**Dress Code:** Tennis shoes (with laces) are required for all students in every P.E. class period. Otherwise, any comfortable clothing (many students prefer shorts or sweats) is sufficient, keeping in mind that many P.E. classes will occur outside in the rain. Outside games are not cancelled due to weather, so students are expected to always come prepared for cold, wet, and muddy conditions.

**Class Time:** After learning the rules for the day, students are assigned teams and spend the rest of the class period playing the game! The students self-referee and learn to resolve any conflicts or disputes quickly and without drama.

**Grading:** I want all students to find enjoyment in playing games with others. Consequently, my grading reflects what I hope the students will also learn to value:

*Effort, Participation, Sportsmanship, and Teamwork*

Eighth graders are also graded on their leadership skills. This means that they are not only responsible for themselves, but also for helping their classmates feel comfortable in class. I often tell them that the success of their particular P.E. class is a reflection of the leadership of their 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

**After School Sports:** NOVA organizes a few sports teams for students to participate in outside of the school day: Fall – cross country, Winter – basketball, and Spring – soccer. All of our teams welcome participants at any level as our focus is on learning the individual skills of the sport and then coordinating our efforts as a team. Detailed information is available prior to each sport season. School spirit at our games is amazing!

I hope that both students and parents will feel comfortable contacting me. The best way to reach me this year will be by email at [Lmanning@novaschool.org](mailto:Lmanning@novaschool.org). If you would prefer to talk, please leave a message with the office and I will get back to you as soon as possible, most likely in the early evening.

Let the games begin!  
Sincerely, Linda Manning – aka Mo

## **ART**

Dear Parents,

Welcome to a new year of art at NOVA! As always, we will be interlacing hands-on studio work with art history, theory, and appreciation. We will also use the rich intellectual, psychological, and emotional aspects of art study and art making to expand students' understanding of the world and themselves. This year we will work with drawing, sculpture (mostly plaster), and mixed media/installation. First trimester will be devoted to drawing. The drawing unit begins with a sort of traditional approach to mastering the craft of drawing. We will learn and practice how to really see objects as they appear visually and translate that observation into a two-dimensional representation. Students will study line, shape, and shading and use what they learn to produce drawings of static objects (still lifes) in black and white that look real. Next, we will study drawing with color. From there, we will move to experimenting with using drawing to express ideas and feelings. Second trimester will find us making sculptures. The bulk of second trimester will be spent using plaster. We will carve and cast sculptures. Third trimester will be spent creating installations and site-specific works of art using a variety of media.

I am thrilled to be beginning another year of art (my 10th at NOVA!). Students have art twice a week at NOVA. In general, the first half of the week is packed with instructional content (almost always hands on) and the second half of the week is open studio where students can work and receive one-on-one guidance. The students and I work together to assess their progress and determine the best way to help them reach objectives and goals. Part of this process involves you. I will be sending home an assessment rubric that each student and I will collaboratively create that will give an impression of their progress on each major project. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email or phone me, or stop by the MOD!

Warmly,

Mr. Fleming

## **Computers**

Dear NOVA Students and Parents,

### **Purpose:**

The overall purpose of the NOVA School Computer Class is to:

- Give students practice with computer applications that will serve as valuable tools in their other courses.
- Promote technological literacy and computer solving skills.
- Provide students with the opportunity to use their creative and/or analytic talents with computers.

### **Curriculum:**

At NOVA the focus of the computer course changes every three years. This year the course focus is on databases; what they are, how to use them, and how to create them. Students will meet for computer class once per week during the fall and winter trimesters, and twice a week in the spring. This year the students will spend fall trimester on keyboarding skills, working towards an eventual goal of 45 words per minute. Because class only meets once per week in the fall we are requesting that students practice keyboarding skills at home if possible. We will also spend time going over the basics of the Open Source software we have at school touching on creating and saving text documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. New students will cover fundamentals of using our network, operating systems, and office productivity software. Students who have already demonstrated proficiency with their keyboarding skills will have other options available to them, such as learning a programming language or 3-D computer animation, website design (or whatever else we can arrange that is both interesting and challenging to the student).

At the end of fall trimester and into winter trimester the students will be learning the fundamentals of databases by completing activities around organizing, categorizing, and retrieving data from databases. Spring trimester will involve the students putting those skills into action for a final project--creating a quality usable database. This unit will require students to work independently and to use extreme care and accuracy. Although specific feedback will be given to students on their projects, students will be graded in computer class strictly on effort. Students should remain focused and make steady daily progress on assignments.

## **Computers/Network/Software**

We ask students to work quietly whenever they are in the computer lab, conversing in a whisper voice when needed. Students may listen to music through headphones during independent work time. Students will be held to the acceptable use policy at all times. Students face a warning/restriction from using computers (depending on the severity of the action) if they are caught breaking the acceptable use policy. Food and drink are strictly prohibited in the computer lab as well as at other computer stations throughout the building.

Students will have accounts on the school network for saving work. Students will not have individual e-mail accounts at Nova School, but may access free e-mail accounts (Hotmail, Yahoo, G-mail, etc...) during school for academic purposes only. Portable USB drives also serve as an efficient way to transport work between home and school.

NOVA School has computers which use Windows 2000, Windows XP, and Ubuntu LINUX operating systems. NOVA uses a large assortment of open source software, including OpenOffice. Documents made with OpenOffice are compatible with Microsoft Office. With rare exception, teachers at NOVA will not accept technical difficulties as an excuse for a late assignment. However, students will generally not be expected to complete computer class assignments as homework.

Sincerely, David Campbell & Kiirsten Flynn- Computer Class Teachers

## **SILENT READING**

Silent Reading class is an opportunity for students to pursue a variety of reading interests. There are three main requirements for the class. The first is that students keep a record of the works they read in class. The second is that students read at least one selection during the trimester from the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade canons. The canons are recommended reading lists meant to appeal specifically to our community of middle school students. The third requirement is that students create a book recommendation card to be displayed in our school library. Beyond this, students are encouraged to read books they enjoy reading. To insure students read different types of literature in class, students may not read books from the same genre consecutively. Otherwise, we have a great collection of books in our library and we encourage students to challenge themselves in their reading and to read new things. Silent Reading is a chance for students to have a bit of a rest and to read interesting things.

Jason Gacek  
Kiirsten Flynn

## **DRAMA**

Dear NOVA Parents and Students,  
Drama class meets once a week for two trimesters and will focus specifically on developing dramatic movement and expression. Each class usually begins with a warm up exercise before moving into an activity. This class is designed to help students understand basic stagecraft and become more comfortable and appropriately expressive in front of an audience. I would like to encourage all students to try out for either dramatic or tech roles in our school play which will occur after the new year.

## **6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE ADVISORY**

Dear Families,

Advisory is a class that focuses on issues that are important to middle school age people. During the 6<sup>th</sup> grade year, Advisory meets on Friday mornings. Typically, the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade class is present in order to help foster a cohesiveness unique to their class. At other times, we break into small groups in order to encourage more opportunities for individual participation.

Over the course of the year we work on getting to know one another, developing self-esteem, the transitions into middle school, and any issues that come up around the school. Advisory is a discussion and activities course. Students are expected to participate within their comfort zone. Emphasis is on learning to express ones opinions and ideas appropriately.

If you have any questions, ideas, or concerns about anything covered in Advisory, please feel free to contact me. It is easiest to reach me at NOVA via email at [lmanning@novaschool.org](mailto:lmanning@novaschool.org). Mr. Gacek, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, and JoAnn Mitchell Young, the school counselor, also participate in Advisory and may be contacted if I am unavailable.

We really look forward to getting to know everyone this year!

Sincerely,

Linda Manning – aka Mo

## **STRINGS**

Welcome to NOVA Strings!

Goals: We will concentrate on the goal of each individual student having correct position, good tone, and careful intonation. The goal of rehearsals as a group will be the 10 elements of group playing: tone, quality, rhythmic accuracy, articulation, balance, note accuracy, pitch accuracy, musical direction, style period awareness, ensemble interaction, and convincing performance style.

Practice: Students should practice daily at home, preferably at least 30 minutes. Practice times should be recorded on a 3x5 card with a parent's signature, and the weekly totals given to me each Tuesday. Practice should consist of 1) scales, 2) technique exercises, 3) slow practice on music literature, and 4) review or up-to-speed sections of the orchestra music.

If a student is taking private lessons, the 30 minutes of required practicing may include the private lesson music.

Concerts: We will be having assembly and concert performances throughout the school year, and the dates will be posted on the NOVA website calendar. Reminder newsletters will also be sent home with the students before each concert or assembly performance. Attendance at the performances will count towards the students' effort grade. Dress for assembly performances may vary, but concert dress is, for girls, white blouse, long black skirt, and black shoes. For boys, white shirt, black pants, black socks, and black shoes.

Grades: Grades are given in achievement, effort, and behavior.

The *achievement* grade is 50% participation in class and concerts, and 50% is from playing quizzes. Students are tested individually on certain parts of the music. Testing dates and sections of the music to be tested are assigned one week before the test. The students should write this information in pencil in their music and also in their assignment books. I can be available during lunch to help students before tests. Tests may not be made up; however, students may raise their lowest test score by one letter grade if they attend a concert *of my recommendation* and turn in the program and notes from the concert.

The *effort* grade is 50% effort in class and 50% practice time at home.

The *behavior* grade is following school rules in the rehearsals, as well as being prepared, on time, and respectful. No food, drink, gum in the Trow.

If you ever have any questions, please email me at [juliepsalm150@hotmail.com](mailto:juliepsalm150@hotmail.com) or call me at home at 360-970-3793

Sincerely,  
Miss Funchion

## **BAND**

Hello students and family, I am looking forward to a great year at NOVA with our Band. The students all seem engaged and eager to learn/grow as musicians.

We will perform a few concerts throughout the year (dates to be determined) and perhaps one or two performances outside of school for a taste of "real world" experience. In keeping with our philosophy, we add a spoon full of knowledge to every day; Music theory, Italian Language, and Ear Training are part of our daily routine.

I encourage all our new students to find a private instructor for the year. Students find greater enjoyment in playing as their performance level increases. You can find beginning books for your instrument at Yenny's Music on the Westside.

Best Regards,

Tracey D. Hooker