

PROGRAM OF STUDIES

2015-2016



Weston Middle School
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THE WESTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION AND HISTORY

MISSION STATEMENT

Weston Middle School, in partnership with the community, strives to empower students to become successful through dynamic, differentiated, and authentic learning experiences, while supporting their transition from childhood to adolescence.

HISTORY

Weston Middle School opened for grades 5-8 in 1972 and added grade 4 to the school in 1994. In September, 2001, grade 4 returned to Hurlbutt and the school, once again, became a 5-8 building. In September, 2005 grade 5 joined the newly opened Weston Intermediate School, and Weston Middle School became a 6-8 building. Weston Middle School received national recognition by the United States Department of Education for Excellence in Education in 1988. The school provides outstanding educational services for middle school children in grades 6-8.

Weston Middle School offers a variety of learning experiences designed to allow young people to continue to master their learning skills and to explore new opportunities. The curriculum is organized to promote decision making and problem-solving, and the competencies and life skills needed for successful citizenship and a productive future in the 21st century.

PRE-K-12 LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

By successfully meeting the Weston Public Schools graduation requirements, students will demonstrate proficiency in the following foundational academic, personal, and social competencies:

I: Visual, Verbal, Aural, and Written Language

- Comprehension and analysis for visual, verbal, aural, and written language necessary for adult learning.

II: Communication through the written word

- Clear and effective communication through the written word.

III: Presentation Skills

- Preparation and delivery of clear and effective presentations to a variety of audiences.

IV: Quantitative Problem Solving

- The ability to apply quantitative methods for problem solving.

V: Critical and Creative Thinking

- The ability to think critically and creatively: assess, interpret, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information.

VI: Information Literacy

- The ability to research, apply knowledge and skills across disciplines, and synthesize information in order to solve authentic problems.

VII: Technology Skills

- The ability to apply technological skills to effective communications and authentic problems solving.

VIII: Integrity in Identity and Community

- The development of a commitment to act cooperatively and responsibly with civility and integrity.

IX: Health and Well-Being

- The ability to make positive decisions related to physical and emotional wellness.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

SCHOOL COUNSELING

The Weston Middle School Counseling Department focuses on supporting the students' transition from childhood to early adolescence through counseling services and program planning. Our goal is to aid students in the development of the necessary skills in order to succeed in the areas of academic achievement, career exploration and personal and social growth and development.

Middle school counselors provide a full range of school counseling services. They offer individual planning and goal setting, academic advisement and transitional support. Counselors also have a key role in the evaluation of standardized tests and in the interpretation of the results with parents and students. Counselors provide meaningful classroom lessons at each grade level that target the areas of personal and social development, academic goal setting and career exploration. Healthy decision-making and character development are key points in these activities.

Our students are living in a rapidly changing world with increased technology, rigorous curriculum expectations and an emphasis on 21st century skills. The school counseling department is an integral part to the total educational program, providing proactive leadership that ensures all students are engaged in programs and services that enable them to achieve success in school. School counselors, with the help of parents and the school community, hope to help all students leave the middle school with academic integrity, a strong character and goals for the future. This solid foundation will enable our students to be successful in high school and beyond.

PUPIL SERVICES

Counseling and health services are available for any student at the middle school who might need assistance. These services can be assessed directly through the school counselors and school nurse. Additional services in the following areas are also available depending on student need. These include: psychological, speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, health care plans and academic support.

Students with significant health issues that might impair their ability to function at school can be referred for a 504 meeting to determine if additional services or school accommodations are needed. Section 504

of the Rehabilitation Act makes provision for equal access for students with an identified disability. A 504 team would meet to gather information, set up assignments if necessary and/or procure medical documentation of the health issue. This team would determine if the health issue is a disability and if it impacts a major life function. If these two criteria are met, a 504 accommodation plan would be developed for the student.

Students who might need additional support services due to academic difficulties can be referred by teachers, administrator or parents to the pupil service team for review. This referral is made through the student's school counselor. The pupil service team will make recommendations for interventions to assist the student. If these interventions are not successful over a period of time, a referral for a Special Education evaluation may be made. A PPT (Planning and Placement Team) meeting will be arranged to discuss the possibility of an evaluation. If an evaluation is completed, the PPT will reconvene upon its completion to determine if the student meets criteria for specialized instruction and special education identification. Special Education services are provided through an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) which is developed by a team which consists of an administrator, regular and special education teacher and appropriate related service staff.

Parents are an important part of either a 504 or IEP team process. Working collaboratively with the school team will assist your child in performing successfully at WMS.

LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS

The WMS Library Learning Commons provides a rich variety of resources, programs, and services to our students and staff. Lunchtime, before school, and after school activities are offered to students throughout the year. A diverse range of print and digital sources are available to students in our flexible space as well as online. The Learning Commons offers virtual, 24/7 access to all resources:

<https://sites.google.com/a/westonps.org/wmsllc/> .

Promoting a life-long love of reading is a vital component of the Learning Commons program and is infused into the monthly, as well as the annual calendar. Students in all grades receive monthly opportunities to participate in multimedia book talks. Daily open access is promoted to allow students time to browse for or exchange reading materials anytime throughout the day. In addition, author visits,

school-wide reading incentives, the Nutmeg Book Award program, and summer reading is incorporated into the literacy program of the Learning Commons.

Our Learning Commons seeks to expand the skills and experiences of our students in the following areas: Inquiry and Information Literacy, Creativity and Critical Thinking, Communication and Collaboration, Independent Reading, and Technology and Digital Literacy. Our goal is to encourage the growth of our 21st century learners in our ever-expanding global society.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (SGA)

Our Student Government Association's mission is to provide leadership opportunities for WMS students to become actively involved in student government and service endeavors in order to enhance and promote a positive school climate. Meetings are held twice per month after school. Students are expected to attend meetings, serve on sub-committees, and serve as a voice for their peers and the school itself.

CLUBS/ACTIVITIES

Weston Middle School offers several opportunities for students to participate in after school activities. These activities allow the students to pursue their talents and interests in an environment encouraging enrichment and exploration. Some of the extracurricular activities include: Short Wharf, Jazz Ensemble, Junior Chamber Singers, Yearbook, Art Club, School of Rock, Doodle Camp and Student Association. All students are encouraged to participate, meet new friends, and become more involved in our school community.

SHORT WHARF THEATER PRODUCTION

Short Wharf is the WMS after-school musical theatre club program, open to every student in the school. One major musical is presented each year, usually in late January. Performances are at the high school auditorium. Auditions for roles and placement are held in the fall and all who audition may participate in the show in some capacity. Rehearsals are in the afternoons and move to the high school in January. Students may also participate in the production and technical areas of the program through art and backstage work. Students may also have the opportunity to participate in the production, technical and art areas of the production.

SPORTS PROGRAMS

INTRAMURALS PROGRAM

An after school Sports program is offered to any middle school student interested in pursuing sports. Some of the activities that have been included in this program are flag football, field hockey, cross country, basketball, volleyball, swimming, and track and field. There are some interscholastic competitions with area middle schools. A brochure outlining the various sports activities is distributed by season.

SIXTH GRADE PROGRAM

Welcome to sixth grade. This will be a year of exciting and educational experiences. The sixth grade program at Weston Middle School is one that provides students with an academically challenging curriculum. Together with students, the sixth grade teachers work to ensure that all students are successful in their transition from the intermediate school to the middle school.

Throughout the year students will be offered unique opportunities to explore the subjects of English, math, science, and social studies. In addition, students are exposed to a number of other courses offered through our diverse Practical and Fine Arts program.

The sixth grade program is designed to meet the needs of each sixth grade student and ensure that their first year at Weston Middle School is both educational and rewarding.

LANGUAGE ARTS – 6

The mission of the Weston Public Schools English Department is to empower each student to become a lifelong reader and writer through the implementation of a Reader's and Writer's Workshop model. By providing explicit and rigorous instruction across multiple genre, students read a high volume of engaging, complex texts while integrating transferable, high-level thinking skills. Students discuss and write about their reading individually and collaboratively. Within Writer's Workshop, students engage in the writing process to determine self-selected, engaging writing topics that will be communicated to a specific audience for a meaningful purpose and with an intended message. The use of technology is embedded throughout all units of study and may include research strategies and online communication tools at various points of the year.

Some genre-based units of study include:

Reading Units of Study

Memoir/Realistic Fiction/ Fantasy

Critical Literacy – Analysis of digital text

Action Research*

Author Study

Poetry

Ongoing Literature Circles, Response to Text, and Collaborative Discussion

Writing Units of Study

Memoir

Persuasive

Research*

Fiction

Poetry

Ongoing use of Writer's Notebooks

*As part of our curriculum development, the 21st Century Capacities, as detailed in the district AIM Initiative, will be embedded in specified units of study

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening outcomes are in alignment with Connecticut's adoption of the Common Core Standards for Language Arts. There is required summer reading.

MATHEMATICS – 6

Math In Focus 6-1 is the grade level course for sixth graders. Mathematical concepts and skills are introduced utilizing problems that engage students with meaningful applications and reinforced through the use of supplementary materials. Concepts and complementary skills examined include: the number system, ratio and proportions, expressions and equations, geometry, statistics and probability and problem solving. Students in 6-1 will be prepared to take Algebra I in 9th grade.

Math In Focus 6-2 is an accelerated course with a demanding curriculum for students who possess a strong interest and **aptitude** in mathematics. Mathematical concepts and skills are introduced utilizing problems that engage students with meaningful applications and reinforced through the use of supplementary materials. This course focuses less time on direct skill development and more on using those skills to solve real-world problems. Concepts and complementary skills examined include: the number system, ratio and proportions, expressions and equations, geometry, statistics and probability and problem solving. *Students in 6-2 must maintain at least a B+ average to remain in the course.* Students in 6-2 will be prepared to take Algebra I in 8th grade.

Math in Focus 6-3 is a fast-paced algebra preparatory course for the exceptionally talented and self-motivated student. These students have mastered the foundational skills and possess an extremely **strong aptitude** and interest in mathematics. Concepts and complementary skills examined include: operations and applications of integers, decimals, and fractions, variables and expressions, solving and graphing

equations and inequalities, proportionality and percents, number theory, exponents and scientific notation, perimeter, area, and volume, the Pythagorean Theorem, and problem solving. *Students in 6-3 must maintain at least a B+ average to remain in the course.*

All courses are aligned to the Common Core State Standards which have been adopted by the state of Connecticut. Along with the content, emphasis is placed on developing the following mathematical practices; (1) make sense of problems and persevere in solving them, (2) reason abstractly and quantitatively, (3) construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others, (4) model with mathematics, (5) use appropriate tools strategically. (6) attend to precision, (7) look for and make use of structure, and (8) look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

SCIENCE – 6

Sixth grade science is based on the CT Science Frameworks. The minimal expectation for all students is conceptual understanding of the following essential questions.

Energy Transfer and Transformations – What is the role of energy in our world?

6.1 - Energy provides the ability to do work and can exist in many forms.

Work is the process of making objects move through the application of force.

Energy can be stored in many forms and can be transformed into motion.

Matter and Energy in Ecosystems – How do matter and energy flow through ecosystems?

6.2 - An ecosystem is composed of all the populations that are living in a certain space and the physical factors with which they interact.

Populations in ecosystems are affected by biotic factors, such as other populations, and abiotic factors, such as soil and water supply.

Populations in ecosystems can be categorized as producers, consumers and decomposers of organic matter.

Energy in the Earth's Systems – How do external and internal sources of energy affect the Earth's systems?

6.3 - Variations in the amount of the sun's energy hitting the Earth's surface affect daily and seasonal weather patterns.

Local and regional weather are affected by the amount of solar energy these areas receive and by their proximity to a large body of water.

Science and Technology in Society – How do science and technology affect the quality of our lives?

6.4 - Water moving across and through earth materials carries with it the products of human activities.

Most precipitation that falls on Connecticut eventually reaches Long Island Sound.

The WMS Science program is inquiry based with students engaged in a variety of investigations. A textbook is used for each of the content areas and serves as reinforcement for content as well as for the development of reading skills and vocabulary development.

SOCIAL STUDIES – 6 & 7

World Regional Studies is a two-year course for Grades 6 and 7. Students study world regions through the multiple lenses of: geography, economics, history, and civics. Global issues provide opportunities for addressing multiple standards through focused inquiry, inviting students to generate and research compelling questions. Students conduct in-depth inquiry and explore regional themes through localized topics or issues.

The study of the world's regions and cultures requires that students generate and research compelling questions such as:

- How do physical features of a place/region influence the decisions we make for ourselves and society?
- How do the structures and functions of government differ around the world?
- How does society best manage resources?
- What makes an event historically significant and do different cultures view events in history differently?
- Am I a global citizen? How can I become one?

WORLD LANGUAGE – 6

Our program is aligned with National and State standards for World Language teaching and learning. Teachers use a variety of learning activities and differentiated instruction such as songs, cooperative learning groups, projects, dialogues, presentations, on-line resources and games to achieve desired learning goals. Students are evaluated on their communicative ability in the target language through a variety of linguistic tasks, listening, oral and written evaluations as well as authentic performance assessments. The goal of the program is for students to gain knowledge of world history, language and culture that will serve them throughout their lives in order to succeed in the global community.

Program Goals and Outcomes

As a result of participating in a World Language course of study, students will:

- Communicate in a language other than English. (Communication)
- Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures. (Cultures)
- Make connections to other disciplines and acquire knowledge using a second language. (Connections)
- Participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world. (Communities)
- Gain insight into the nature of language and culture. (Comparisons)

The World Languages available are Spanish and French. Students engage in language study daily and are expected to commit to studying one language while in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Grade 6 Spanish

Students engage in language study every other day for the full year. Instruction builds on previous language learning begun in FLES program. This is a transition year for students in which they begin to utilize a textbook and workbook, and apply technology to language learning. There is a strong emphasis on listening and speaking with increased development of reading and writing skills as students learn to express their ideas. Students explore concepts such as; How are cultures the same? Why study another language? What are the advantages of knowing another language? Students exchange information on topics such as greeting others, family, school, school subjects and schedules, numbers, foods, telling time and more.

Grade 6 French

Students engage in language study every other day for the full year. French 6 is an introductory language course designed to teach the fundamentals of communication. Students will learn to talk about themselves, their family, and their school as they are introduced to common vocabulary, pronunciation, and basic grammar. The emphasis will be on the oral language and how the connection between how the language sounds and how it looks on paper. Songs, games, and poems will be used to reinforce these skills and provide the students with a strong framework for the spoken language.

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION – 6

In Tech Ed, students will learn about the nature, power, influence and effects of technology on our lives. The sixth grade focus is on manufacturing technology and robotics. Students learn the safe use of manufacturing tools, machines and processes to develop a product in the woodworking lab. Using Lego robotics, the students build and program robots to solve problems.

WELLNESS EDUCATION – 6

The 6th Grade Wellness Education program prepares students for the physical, social, and emotional changes experienced during adolescence. Topic areas include: Fitness and Nutrition, Goal Setting and Reflection, Human Growth and Development, Sense of Self, and Stress. Class instruction focuses on developing skills needed to make educated and healthy life choices. The Wellness curriculum includes several mandates from the State of Connecticut. Parents, for personal or religious reasons, may submit a written request to the school to have their son/daughter(s) excused from portions of the curriculum related to Human Growth and Development and AIDS education. The remainder of the curriculum is mandated by the State of Connecticut and students are required to participate.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION – 6

The sixth grade physical education program provides enjoyable physical experiences that promote the acquisition of skills needed for an active lifestyle. Our balanced program includes activities that target movement and perceptual motor skills, balance, fitness, and cooperation. Self-advocacy and communication is the main focus of the sixth grade Project Adventure experience. The skills developed become the basis for a physically active and socially and emotionally sound lifestyle.

MUSIC – 6

The sixth-grade music program provides students with the choice of taking Group Guitar, Band, Orchestra or Chorus. Students take full-year courses, which are outlined below.

Group Guitar Class - 6

The sixth-grade Group Guitar Class is designed to address performance, aesthetic training, and further develop musical understanding. It is eclectic and integrated program aligned with National and State Standards for music education. Students review the musical concepts previously learned in their musical

training and will cultivate listening and singing skills. Students perform music by playing and improvising on guitar.

In the group guitar class, there is a focus on tonal functions, theory, rhythmic reading, melodic structure, and more complex harmonic structure. Solfege syllables and Curwen hand signs are used to strengthen students' understanding of pitch relationships and melodic intervals, and strengthen their skill in reading melodic lines. Students will explore traditional American folk and popular music through performing and responding to a variety of music styles and genres, and by composing their own music.

Performance Music – 6

Performance music encompasses elective participation in choral, band and string ensembles, culminating in public performances. It provides the opportunity to develop and refine individual aptitudes, skills and understanding, experiences in group dynamics and communicative power.

Sixth Grade Chorus is open to all sixth graders who enjoy singing and want to improve their ability. Attention is given to proper breathing, tone production, diction and music reading. Students learn two-part singing. There is a minimum of three performances each year.

Sixth Grade Orchestra is open to all students who play orchestral string instruments. Students are also involved in music sectionals where they are excused from other classes on a rotating basis. They are expected to make up any class work they miss. Private lessons are encouraged. There is a minimum of three concerts each year.

Sixth Grade Band is a beginner performing ensemble open to sixth grade students who wish to continue learning a band instrument or start learning an instrument for the first time. In addition to ensemble rehearsals, students are also involved in music sectionals where they are excused from other classes on a rotating basis. They are expected to make up any class work they miss. There is a minimum of three concerts per year.

Mixed-Grade ensembles 6-8

The following co-curricular opportunities are available to students through an audition process.

WMS Chamber Singers is a small vocal ensemble of students from grades 6 through 8, chosen through audition, who learn and perform more complex vocal material. They meet one afternoon a week

after school, and perform in various venues and competitions. Students must have a serious commitment to acquiring vocal excellence, both individually and as an ensemble.

Chamber Ensemble is a small string group of students from grades 6 through 8, chosen through audition, who learn and perform advanced string ensemble music. They meet one afternoon a week after school, and perform in various venues and competitions. Students must have a serious commitment to acquiring excellence on their instruments, both individually and as an ensemble.

WMS Jazz Lab Band is a beginning jazz ensemble comprised of sixth and seventh grade students. Auditions for this group take place at the beginning of each new school year. Students learn how to improvise and perform beginning and intermediate levels of jazz music on their instrument. Participation in a WMS music ensemble during the school day is required by all students admitted into the Jazz Lab Band. Rehearsals are after school, there is a minimum of three performances per year.

VISUAL ART – 6

Sixth grade students begin their studies in the art room by investigating various aspects of color theory. Our study includes complementary colors, color mixing, and how color affects the mood of a picture. Students work on a watercolor project after analyzing basic color properties. Sixth grade students also study story-writing in conjunction with illustration. The illustrated story project focuses on what makes a story engaging by emphasizing thoughtful development of setting, characters and conflict. Students learn how to make illustrations clear, legible, and fitting to their story. The sixth grade art curriculum will also include a ceramics project in which students learn to create hollow-form vessels from pinch pots. These vessels can be made into creative characters or functional pieces, as students choose.