



2017 – 2018

Mott Hall II

Spotlight on Grade 6

A Scholar's Year of Transition

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH<sup>1</sup>

Mott Hall II scholars have to manage several priorities. In addition to staying on top of their class work, homework and grades, they may be taking on new extracurricular activities. Sixth grade scholars have the added challenge of adjusting to a new school, new friends, new teachers, and more responsibilities.

In sixth grade, your child is making the shift to adolescence. As your scholar develops and makes this transition, s/he will manage change, hone interpersonal skills, cope with peer pressure, and cultivate personal interests and abilities. In addition, your scholar may experience the following:

- May have sudden, dramatic, emotional changes linked to puberty
- Goes back and forth between being mature one moment, and immature the next
- Is focused on self, alternating between high expectations and poor self-concept
- Has difficulty with decisions but needs to be able to make some choices for themselves
- Demands privileges, but may avoid responsibilities
- Has a range and intensity of emotions
- Tends to hide feelings
- Is hard on self and very sensitive to criticism
- Wants parents' help, but may resist when offered
- Is critical of parents
- Exhibits less overt affection and attention shown to parents, with occasional rudeness
- Is competitive, wants to excel, and may put down the "out group"
- Is concerned with prestige and popularity
- Likes to belong to a group and be like others
- Follows trends and fads
- Prefers to spend time on weekends with friends
- Friendships may change due to different levels of maturity
- Shows more self-assertion and curiosity
- Is physically exuberant, restless, wiggly, and talks a lot
- Feels unique; believes that no one else has ever felt the way he does, suffered so much, or been so misunderstood.

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<sup>1</sup> American School Counselor Association, FamilyEducation.com and Children's Health Network

Ms. Robbins has an open-door policy with students. They are encouraged to seek out assistance from an adult they trust, when they need academic, social and/or emotional support.

## **HOW WE SEEK TO HELP OUR SCHOLARS THROUGH THE TRANSITION**

Mott Hall II is known for its welcoming atmosphere, positive setting, and nurturing environment. We seek to develop and encourage our 6<sup>th</sup> grade scholars as they transition to middle school. Our approach includes:

- Structures and similar routines across all classrooms to help students adjust to the Mott Hall II culture
- Clear expectations, as well as predictable rules and consequences, followed by consistent follow-through
- Encouragement without telling them what and how to accomplish a task
- Redirection in positive and enthusiastic ways by providing them with brief, helpful information.
- We do our best to be aware of their sensitivity to change, as scholars in this age group take everything personally and it usually is translated into “something is wrong with me.”
- Weekly advisory class addresses social-emotional issues such as how to handle conflict, how to communicate effectively and how scholars can learn to advocate for themselves.
- We foster independence, collaboration and communication with families by opening grade books to both students and parents. This allows students and their families to monitor academic progress throughout the year.
- [motthall2.org](http://motthall2.org) is a website where homework assignments, announcements, resources, and school and class events are posted. We use [motthall2.org](http://motthall2.org) and its email functionality for communication with parents and students.

## **ACADEMICS**

The demands of middle school are more challenging than those of elementary school. Scholars will have to manage four content classes, plus several enrichment classes and advisory. The work obligations for schoolwork can feel overwhelming to scholars of any grade, but especially for incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Sixth graders will primarily need assistance with time management, organization, and submitting ALL assignments on time.

We urge you to frequently communicate with your child’s teachers. E-mail is the best and most immediate form of communication. Also, families may request a scheduled conference, if necessary. Our online grading system, in addition to mid-quarter progress reports, report cards

and parent-teacher conferences are a great way to remain informed about your child's progress. Often times, we find 6th graders do not communicate information to their families about their education, nor do they make families aware of the flyers, documents or information sent home via backpack. It will become more of your responsibility to stay informed!

## **GRADING POLICY**

Each teacher has his/her own grading policy and weighs homework, class work, tests, quizzes, projects, and participation slightly differently. We invite parents to attend our Curriculum Night in September to meet with 6th grade teachers and gain a better understanding of how each teacher will evaluate work.

## **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

It is a great distinction to be awarded an honors certificate at Mott Hall II. This award represents more than just scholastic achievement. It also symbolizes a person of character and perseverance. To be an Honors student at Mott Hall II, a scholar must demonstrate exemplary academic performance and conduct in ALL subjects. Second Honors are granted to scholars who achieve an 85 average in all major subjects. First Honors are awarded to scholars who earn a 90 average in all major subjects. The highest academic distinction is Principal's Honors for the scholars who achieve an average of 95 or above in all major subjects.

We award our scholars by holding a quarterly celebration to acknowledge honor roll recipients.

## **CORE CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS**

### **English Language Arts**

This course focuses on basic writing and developing close reading skills. The texts we use are *Freak the Mighty*, *The Outsiders*, *Chew On This*, and *The Giver*. We will also be reading a selection of poetry and various short non-fiction texts, many from NewsELA.com and *The New York Times*. Early in the year, we focus on strengthening sentence and paragraph skills. Throughout the year scholars will have the opportunity to practice narrative, expository, compare-and-contrast, descriptive, and persuasive writing. Scholars will learn to use and maintain the classroom library, as independent reading is an essential part of developing close reading and critical thinking skills. Classroom discussion is a huge part of what we do in ELA, and as such, speaking and listening skills will be taught and exercised all year long.

### **Mathematics**

In 6th grade Math, scholars will be studying a wide range of topics including units on Ratios & Proportional Relationships, Number Sense, Expressions & Equations, Statistics, and Geometry.

These skills are based on the 6th Grade Common Core Learning Standards. The topics will be introduced with relevant examples and reinforced throughout each unit with activities and projects that highlight the relevance of the skills and require using multiple concepts to solve problems. Throughout the year, there will be an emphasis on critical thinking about the real-world meaning behind the numbers and the connections within and outside of the subject. The goal is to develop scholars who can explain their mathematical thinking and use mathematical skills in everyday situations. In addition, scholars should expect to see nightly homework based on the topic covered that day. This homework load may be an adjustment from 5th grade but is important for reinforcing learning and building good study habits.

### **Social Studies**

In 6th grade social studies, students will develop as historians and geographers, as we discover ancient civilizations. Students will explore and debate issues such as the patterns of rising and declining civilizations, how civilizations deal with their need for resources and how geography influences the development of societies. Students will participate in engaging collaborative assignments such as class presentations, debates and research projects. Sixth graders will study Early Humans, Ancient Mesopotamia, India, Greece, and Rome. Over the year, students will develop their writing skills as they create and research historical based questions.

### **Science**

In 6th grade Science, the teachers work to encourage curious scientists in developing and articulating a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. Our curriculum is based on the Next Generation Science Standards, NY State Science Standards, and Common Core ELA Standards for Science and Technical Subjects. Students routinely participate in a variety of hands-on labs and field trips. They demonstrate understanding and show growth through tests, quizzes, labs, and writing assignments ranging from lab reports to public service announcements. 6th graders will learn science content in the units of Nature of Science, Energy & Energy Resources, Work & Simple Machines, Atmosphere, Weather, Classification of Living Things, Biodiversity, and Interdependence. Scholars are also expected and required to complete an independent Science Fair project to be presented in the Spring. Students will study and discuss both past and current scientific discoveries throughout the year.

### **ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**

Mott Hall II scholars participate in many after-school enrichment programs. Our scholars attend programs such as Science & Technology Entry Program (STEP), Appleseed Workshop, TRUCE Fitness & Nutrition Center, Harlem Children's Zone and more. Please contact Ms. Robbins for a full list of available programs, selection criteria and additional information.

## **SCHOLARSHIP & MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS**

The counseling team assists scholars in applying for several programs which help students who would like to pursue boarding school, college readiness, mentoring and more. Programs such as A Better Chance, Breakthrough, TEAK Fellowship and Prep 9 are some of the programs Mott Hall II scholars have been accepted to. Please contact Mrs. Gorman for a full list of opportunities, selection criteria and additional information.

## **HELPING YOUR 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADER MAKE THE TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **What your child might be concerned about**

- Being in a school with older and bigger kids
- Getting to and from school safely
- Being a “little fish in a big pond” when many of them were “big fish” in their elementary schools
- Having multiple teachers – help your child to realize this will be a reality for much of their academic future and they will need to adapt to teachers’ different styles and policies
- Handling the academic demands of class work and homework assignments
- What clubs and activities to choose – this should be an exciting opportunity for students. Encourage them to try new things and to be willing to branch out from their friends
- The future – high school and beyond
- Physical changes and sexuality
- Emotional changes and ups & downs
- What his/her peers think – middle school students are highly focused on and influenced by their peer group
- Making friends and maintaining friendships – social time is important and “life or death” in their eyes. They may be torn between their elementary school friends and new friends.

### **Getting started on the right track**

- Ask questions during the first weeks of school and provide opportunities for your child to share his/her experiences
- Attend Curriculum Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences and other school events to become familiar with the building and school personnel
- Talk about the differences between elementary and middle school

- Listen to your child's frustrations/anxiety and encourage him/her to be patient during this transition period
- Talk to your child about the route s/he should take to and from school and review safety tips (for money, valuable items, and interacting with strangers, including older kids)
- Go over your child's schedule and help him/her plan the day and know what to expect
- Help your child establish morning and nighttime routines to reduce stress (including planning ahead for meals and laundry)
- Make contact with your child's advisor and teachers – tell them about your child, his/her learning preferences, and strengths and weaknesses
- Read about early adolescence and prepare yourself for the ups and downs of middle school – remaining calm and offering an objective perspective can help your child cope with the changes
- Get in the habit of talking daily even if your child is resistant – communication is key!

### **Helping your child stay on the right track**

- Understand that 6<sup>th</sup> grade is a transition year and is often the most difficult for students socially, which in turn affects them academically
- Make sure that your child attends school and arrives on time – missed instructional time can significantly affect your child's adjustment to and success in middle school
- Keep your child supplied with items requested by the teachers – especially notebooks, paper and pens/pencils
- Help your child get a library card and go with him/her the first time
- Make sure your child has regular access to a computer – at home, at the library, or through after-school computer lab
- Check your child's planner daily
- Check your child's backpack once a week
- Check [motthall2.org](http://motthall2.org) and school email regularly
- Help your child get – and stay! – organized. This is critical to academic success. Help set up filing systems, binders, etc. and go through these systems regularly to clean out and update. Go through and clean out the backpack regularly
- Set up a study routine and quiet place for your child to work at home. Make time each day to review your child's homework and talk about academic and social issues.
- Help your child learn to break bigger, long-term projects down into manageable chunks – help your child avoid procrastination! Start from the due date and work backwards to plot out steps to complete projects on time
- Limit TV, phone, internet, and video game time and encourage more physical activity.

- Learn how to navigate Google Drive or purchase a pen drive for your child so s/he can easily transfer documents from school to home
- Watch your children closely on the internet. Take advantage of the programs that most provides filters to monitor who is communicating with your child and what content your child is able to access.
- Help your child to plan meals and limit and/or monitor spending money – adolescents will crave junk food at all times of the day. Their eating habits do affect their performance and ability to concentrate
- Contact advisor quarterly for updates and to maintain lines of communication.
- When your child is feeling down about his/her social, emotional and/or academic life, listen and provide encouragement that “this too shall pass”
- Encourage your child to tell a teacher or other school authority if another student is bothering him/her in any way
- Help your child build self-esteem and independence by helping him/her to solve problems without your intervention. Role-play conversations s/he might need to have with a teacher or friend. Point out resources available at the school to help
- Encourage your child to take advantage of advisory time to get to know older students who can give advice and help your child make the transition more easily
- Allow your child to get involved in extracurricular activities – students need balance – but don’t schedule every minute of their day. They need time to unwind, relax and socialize
- Set clear expectations and boundaries early – they are about to be tested! Be firm and specific and be prepared to not be liked for a while
- Be a model for your child in...
  - Resolving conflict peacefully
  - Listening to both sides
  - Tolerating others’ differences
  - Respecting yourself and others
- Encourage your child to stay true to him/herself and your family’s values – peer pressure at this age is strong. Be clear about what you think is acceptable
- Provide positive reinforcement and celebrate accomplishments. Show your child that hard work pays off. If your child is struggling, look for small accomplishments and highlight the positive
- Continue to read to and with your child
- Take your child to museums, concerts, on trips, etc.
- Stock your home library with young adolescent literature and resource books

- Get involved as a school volunteer – this sends your child the signal that you value his/her education and allows you to connect to your child, his/her friends and other families, and school personnel. Don't allow your child's inevitable embarrassment of you to keep you away
- Stay involved!