



Welcome to Middle School!

6th Grade at Adelante

This year you will have fun, and learn harder material than you have had to learn before. But don't worry, you will be able to handle it because you are older, wiser, and more experienced than you have ever been!

Here are some of the differences between middle school and elementary school:

- Students are now more responsible for their own learning. You need to be organized, copy assignments in your planner (agenda), and turn in assignments on time.
- Your report card looks different. You now just get a letter grade for your subject, and perhaps some comments from the teacher.
- It is not the teacher's job to make sure you are turning in your assignments on time. Your teachers may help remind you with announcements or due dates on the board, but ultimately it is your responsibility to write assignments in your planner and check it daily.
- Keep all of your returned papers. There's not enough space to warehouse your work in the classroom, but you will like to have it because you can use it to study for future tests, or show it to the teacher in the rare event your paper gets dropped from the electronic grade book and you need proof of submission and completion.
- Parents are welcome to contact the teacher to check on a student's progress, but teachers will not generally contact parents about a student's progress. Ask your child to see his or her returned papers.
- Teachers will send home with the student a progress report approximately mid way through each of our three terms (trimesters). Budget cuts no longer allow us the luxury of mailing mid term progress reports.
- Conferences will be held at the end of the first and second terms to discuss your child and their work.
- If you have a problem with something the teacher did or said, *please* first contact the teacher directly, and not the very busy principal. Problems usually are not really problems, but just miscommunication, and can be resolved quickly.
- Please email or make an appointment with the teachers if you have concerns at other times. **cholm@rcsdk8.net** | **afernandez1@rcsdk8.net**

Thanks for choosing Adelante School for your 6th grade year. We are looking forward to working with your children!

What We Do in Class

English

Reading Logs

Students must read in order to become fluent grade level readers. A fluent grade level reader will be able to read the textbooks for comprehension and understanding that will be required in order to graduate from middle school and high school. There is no shortcut. You only get better at reading by reading!

Students must read a *minimum of a half hour in English every day*. The state of California says in its English Language Arts curriculum framework that eighth grade students need to read one million words per year in English, and by grade twelve, two million English words per year. According to the California Reading framework, voracious eighth grade students will read five million words a year in English.

Sixth grade students must “make progress toward this goal.” It would be reasonable for sixth grade students to read at **a minimum of 750,000 words in English**. That would be a minimum of about twenty sixth grade reading level books in the year.

A student reading 750,000 English words at grade level will be exposed to about 2,300 new vocabulary words. Some of these words will be learned by sentence context, but a dictionary is really needed to look up words when reading.

We cannot spend this much time in class reading (we would do little else!), so students must read outside of school hours. For us to be up with state standards, I keep track of reading with reading log sheets. This is part of your child’s English grade.

“Caught-yas”

This is an exercise we do instead of ‘board language’ where students learn grammar rules by correcting two or three sentences daily. Sentences will have all kinds of errors: capitalization, punctuation, verb tense, wrong words, run-ons, sentence fragments, paragraphs errors, and new vocabulary. Students correct the sentences, and then get points, not for being right, but for copying down the reasons *why* there were errors in the sentences. We will learn over 270 new vocabulary words using these exercises.

English Text Book

The district mandates that we use the text book with the schedule provided. It has a variety of good, interesting stories and poetry.



Read Aloud Novels

We read two or more novels together during the year. I use this time to gauge a student’s fluency, bring out the humor and subtleties in the text that students often miss, help students organize their thoughts, learn the structure of the story, monitor for literary devices, discover new English idioms, and learn new vocabulary.

Writing Assignments

Throughout the year I assign several writing assignments, most of which need to be completed outside of the classroom. These assignments cover our state standards such as sequencing, drawing conclusions, persuasion, and using descriptive language.

Math

Math Textbook

We use the math textbook mandated by the district. I feel that it is an excellent book, and covers all of the state requirements in an organized manner. The book reviews concepts from fifth grade, and covers the new sixth grade concepts, including negative numbers, tax and discount, ratios and proportions, linear equations, compound events, survey bias, and others. In order to meet the aggressive schedule for state CST testing, will have math homework almost every night, and sometimes on weekends. Check my web site for homework. <http://chris618.wordpress.com>

You don’t need to carry the math book home. If you have an internet connection, see the math book there:

<http://www.mhschool.com/ose/>
Pswd: FF038A1E20

Multiplication Facts

Unfortunately we always have some students that come into sixth grade and have not memorized, or forgotten, their multiplication facts from third grade. Multiplication facts are a "tool" that will now be used in sixth grade standards such as factoring and finding common denominators. A student cannot pass sixth grade math without having mastered multiplication facts. If I find a student does not know their facts, I will notify you via a note home with the student, and ask you to sign and return the note. You will need to work with your child to get the facts memorized within four weeks of the start of school. Students who don't made adequate progress will be given additional help during recess and after school.

Buzz

This is a fun math game we play together a few times per week, especially at the beginning of the year. It teaches mental math, factoring, logical thinking, and the prime numbers. All of these are required elements for our yearly math standards.

Yosemite data & graphs (Math standard: MR 2.4)

We take temperature or water readings of Yosemite Valley every day from the internet. This teaches discipline, the scientific method, and provides us with real data that we use to make graphs for math projects. Students must copy the data down every day in their notebooks, or they will not be able to do the graph projects, which will seriously hurt their math grade.

Other Items

Homework

Middle school work is harder than elementary, so it takes longer to teach in class. This means that more work must be done by the student at home. Help your child be able to do his/her work by setting up a helpful environment as described on the sheet *How to Help Your Child Succeed in School*.

In general, math homework will take 20-40 min per night, depending upon your child's speed. If your child cannot complete the work after 60 minutes of *concerted, solid effort*, then sign their math notebook with a note explaining the problem. Set aside a *minimum* of 30 minutes *every day* for reading in English. This should not be a hardship, as reading should be relaxing, fun, and a "down-time" for your child. Don't forget to take 90 seconds to fill out the reading log! When reports are assigned, they can be expertly completed if the student spends 30 minutes a night on it.

PE

I take students outside for PE twice a week to meet our district PE requirements. We will stretch, exercise, do physical coordination exercises, run, and play games. Once per fortnight we will have the PlayWorks coordinator lead us in PE. For one trimester, we will have Danny G. lead us in dance once a week in place of our regular PE. Students are graded for participating and trying, and not for how athletic they are.

Classroom Economy

Everyone in my class has a job. Students receive a "paycheck" at the end of the month for doing their job, and are required to pay "rent" for their seat. If they have any money left, they may save it to buy their seat, or spend it on items in our class auction. The economy simulation teaches about making a budget, living within your means, the importance of work, how to use a three column accounting form, how to write checks, the value of saving, the value of owning property, the pleasure of shopping with money you have earned, and the satisfaction of having meaningful work. The economy is extremely popular with students, and is also a motivator for students who may not otherwise be motivated by school.

Learning Modalities

Early in the year students fill out a survey of questions to help them discover what their best personal methods of learning are. Everyone has at least two, but everyone uses all eight to various extents. This helps me and the student know where their learning strengths are, and where they need to work harder. Based upon the research of Dr. Howard Garner, the eight "intelligences," or learning modalities, are: body/kinesthetic, music, interpersonal, linguistic, logical/mathematical, intrapersonal, nature, and visual. If you would like to take an online version of the test, go to my web site under Useful Stuff, or this link: <http://www.literacyworks.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html>

Grading and Due Dates



Your teachers assign you homework and projects so that you can learn and master the sixth grade standards. There will usually be some time given in class to get some of your work done. You will usually have to finish your work for homework. Your teacher will tell you when your homework is due and write it on the board so you can copy it into your planner. Generally, math homework is due the next day. Social studies or English reports may be due anywhere from one to four weeks after they are assigned.

Regular homework will account for no more than 10% of a term's grade. This specifically *excludes* reports and projects.

If homework is not done by the start of class, the student may be required to do it during recess or after school.

Due Dates

To help students know when their homework and projects are due, we write the due dates on our classroom white boards. Students are expected to write it in their planners (agendas).

Many parents want to know what assignments their students are working on, and when they are due. Parents should do the following:

Ask to see your child's planner.

- If the planner seems wrong, ask your student to have the teacher sign the planner with the day's homework, then check for the teacher's signature.
- Check Maestro Chris' blog: chris618.wordpress.com
- Email the teacher: holm@rcsdk8.net | afernandez1@rcsdk8.net

Absent on the Due Day

If a student knows in advance that he or she will not be in school when an assignment is due, the student needs to turn in the assignment *on the day before* he or she will be gone. Examples include GATE class, family trips, etc.

If a student is unexpectedly ill on a due day, the assignment may be turned in with no penalty when the students returns to school.

Extended Days Off

If the student will be gone for an extended time, the student must make arrangements with the office for an independent study plan, *and* see the teacher at least *a week* in advance to determine when to get their assignments.

Late Work

We want to help your child prepare for the work expectations for the rest of middle school and high school. We have therefore instituted the following policy for the acceptance of late work and projects:

- Assignments that are turned in after the due date are considered late, unless there is an extenuating circumstance that is beyond the control of the student. Such extenuating circumstances must be communicated to the teacher in advance of the due date if possible, or accompanied by a parent note if it was not possible. The teacher may or may not accept the excuse to give late work full credit.
- Late assignments will have points deducted, depending upon how late it is turned in.
- Late assignments will be accepted up until five school days after they were due. After that, they will not be accepted, and the student will receive a zero for the assignment.

For example, if an assignment is due on a Tuesday, it will be late if it is turned in after Tuesday. The teacher will accept it for the next five school days: Wednesday through Friday, and Monday & Tuesday of the following week. After that fifth day the following Tuesday, the assignment will not be accepted, and the student receives a zero for the grade.

It is much better to turn in a paper late than not to turn it in at all, because some points are better than no points. Zero point assignments will hurt your grade very quickly.

Grading Scale

The middle school grading scale for homework, papers, projects, reports, and report cards is as follows:

97 - 100%	A+	Understands the material very well
94 -96%	A	
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Understands most of the material
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	Understands some of the material
74-76%	C	
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	Does not understand the material and needs to get assistance
64-66%	D	
60-63%	D-	
50-60%	F	
<50%	F-	

Retakes

I believe that it is more important for a student to come away from the class understanding the material and the concepts than it is to just get answers right on an exam. I recognize that students learn at different rates, and that it may take extra time for some people to learn the course material. For this reason, any student may make arrangements with me to retake a quiz or exam (not homework) to get a better score and grade. Retakes must be done before the end of trimester grade closing period set by the school.

Instead of retakes, I may require students to redo missed test questions to improve their grade.

Cheating

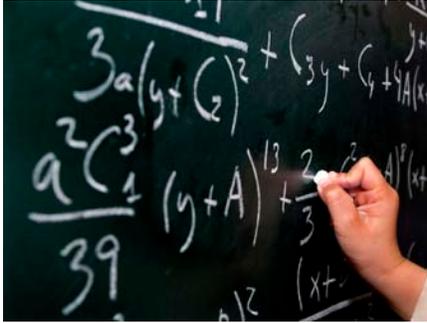
Cheating will not be tolerated, and people caught cheating on quizzes or exams will be given a zero for the whole exam. There will be no chance for a retake.

Why I grade with an A+

It is my opinion that a student should not have to be perfect in order to get an A in my class. Some students “stress out” over trying to be perfect on tests. Perfectionism can lead to feelings of being inadequate, because it is impossible to be perfect.

I do not want students who are doing great work to ever feel inadequate in my classes, so that it why it is possible to score a 94% and still get a “straight A” from me.

Why Go To School?



President Thomas Jefferson was the first American leader to suggest that the United States create a public school system. His ideas were that schools should be available to anyone irrespective of their religion or class in society. These ideas were used when states started to create public schools in the mid 1800's. Before this time, most schools in the US were run by religious organizations or available only to the wealthy. By 1918, all states had laws requiring children to attend at least elementary school.

Some reasons for creating the public school system was so that children could grow up to make intelligent decisions in who should govern our country, and to instill American values of equality and freedom in the individual.

On a more practical level, having a successful education increases a person's chance of getting a good, well-paying job. Look at these figures from the US Government:

Education Level	Percentage Employed (2010 data)	Average Yearly Salary (2008 data)	Percentage greater than HS dropout
High School Dropout	82.4%	\$23,500	--
High School Graduate	88.5%	\$30,000	27.6% more money
Some College (2-year AA degree)	91%	\$36,000	53.2% more money
College Graduate (BA degree)	94.9 %	\$46,000	95.7% more money
College Graduate (Master's degree)	94.9%	\$55,000	134% more money
Professional Athlete	Chances of getting a job: 0.006%	\$30,406	29.3% more money

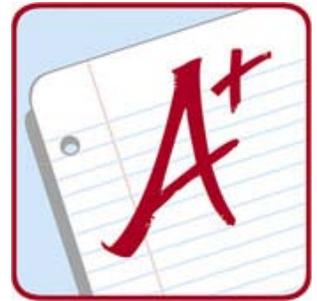
<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t04.htm>
<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>
<http://www1.salary.com/Professional-Athlete-Salary.html>

The economy may be difficult for some years to come. Education pays off with better jobs, and a better chance to get a job.

We want all of our students to succeed! By doing well in school **now**, your child will be able to do the harder work school requires next year and into high school and college.

How To Help Your Child Succeed In School

1. Make sure he/she has breakfast every morning, either at home or at school.
2. Have him/her go to bed by 9:00 PM or earlier.
3. Have a family culture that makes school important, both by your words, and by your actions supporting school work and effort.
4. Prioritize school by not having your child absent for vacations, family gatherings, shopping, or other reasons. Have your child only be out of school for illness or doctor appointments.
5. Provide a time and a place for good study habits at home for your child to do his/her homework, reading, projects, and reports. Music may be played softly, but no TV or other media should be on. Keep sibling interruptions to a minimum.
6. Hold your child accountable for doing his/her school work before getting privileges such as TV, video games, internet, telephone, playing, sports, or family outings.



Parents: *you do not have to know how to do your student's homework in order to help them.* Doing the 6 steps above will help greatly! If your child is "stuck" and doesn't know how to do the work, there are resources available. They may see me at lunch, recess, or after school. The public library offers free tutoring. There are links for help on my web site. They can call a friend for help. There are no excuses for not doing the homework.

Research has shown that **all people** have roughly the same chance of succeeding in school, whether they live in China, India, Japan, Korea, Germany, Finland, Mexico, El Salvador, or Redwood City.

The only thing that separates the success rates of these people is the **amount of time they spend successfully doing** their school work. People who spend more time working on a problem before giving up get more successful! Your child will rise to the top of his or her ability if he/she spends the time doing the work the teacher assigns. It's that simple!

Backpack Weight

Every year we see students with overweighted backpacks, or backpacks that are almost too heavy to lift. According to experts, school children should have a backpack that weighs no more than 10% - 15% of the child's *ideal weight*. (This is less than the 25% - 33% recommended for adult backpackers.)

If a sixth grade student weighs 90 pounds, then the backpack should weigh no more than 9-13 pounds. Bigger children can carry slightly more, but note that overweight children *should not* carry 10% - 15% of their weight; the weight guideline is based upon the *ideal weight* for children, and heavy children should not carry more.

Remember too that the backpack itself has weight, so don't get a backpack that is overlarge.

For my classes I require:

- 3 spiral ring notebooks (1 ½ pounds total)
 - 1 composition book (½ pound)
 - 1 planner (agenda) (½ pound)
 - 2 pencils and 2 pens (2 ounces total)
 - Ruler, eraser, and scissors (2 ounces total)
 - 1 Math textbook (4.4 pounds) (Can be reduced to 0 pounds by using the Math computer CD at home)
 - Optional markers, colored pencils, graph paper (about ½ pound)
 - **TOTAL: 2.75 – 7.25 pounds**
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- Perhaps a few times a year I may require students to take the English literature textbook home. It weighs 4.8 pounds.



When we find backpacks that are very heavy, often it's because they have been filled with several reading books, returned assignment papers, old school notices, stacks of blank paper, organizers, large pencil boxes, snacks, water bottles, and other treasures.

We don't want students to hurt themselves with overweighted backpacks! If you think your child's backpack is getting too heavy, check what is in it against the list above.

About Maestro Chris

I was raised in Redwood City and attended school in the Redwood City School District. I have been married for over 25 years, and we have three children. One is attending Kennedy Middle School, one is at Woodside HS, and one is at UC Irvine. All three of our children have graduated from Adelante School!

I graduated with honors from Calif. State University, Hayward, with a BA degree in Music and a minor in Chemistry. Upon graduating, I taught for one year in a private school, and five years in the Brisbane School District as a classroom Music and Computer specialist. For both subjects I had to develop and teach the district's curriculum. In Brisbane I taught all grade levels, K-8.

After leaving the Brisbane School District, I worked in the software industry for nearly twelve years at Adobe Systems. I next spent a short time in the financial services arena as a registered and licensed commodity trading advisor.

I have come back full-circle and have been teaching 6th grade English, math, science, and PE at Adelante School since 2006. I bring my considerable experience outside of school into the classroom and teach in a real life, real world fashion. I desire the best effort from students in order for them to succeed to their full potential.

People who know me have said that I'm a funny, warm person, but sometimes hard to get to know at first. I've also been described as caring, practical, reserved, excellent, facetious, sentimental, and playful. I love being with your children and teaching them!



Help Your Child Succeed!

As a parent you work hard. You have a job to provide for your family, and you work to raise your children the best that you possibly can. You know that everyone has work to do in life.

Many things vie for your child's time: school, sports, music lessons, friends, religious activities, clubs, family & relatives. All of these things are important, but your child's work, or job, is to go to school and learn.

Middle School students are still children, and they need your guidance so they can grow up. Make sure they understand the importance of school, and that just as you have to go to work five days a week, they have to go to their "job" too and do well at it. Show your support for your child's "work life" by asking about how school is going. Show that school is important by checking to see that homework is being brought home, finished on time, and returned to school.

Make sure they get enough sleep, which is crucial for middle school children whose bodies are changing. Be sure they get a good breakfast. Tell them you love them and show them that they are important to you (no matter what their grades), because that's what life is about.