

THE DOWNINGTOWN SIXTH GRADE CENTER

If you were building a new school, and were able to involve enthusiastic kids, experienced teachers, committed parents, an interested business community, an inspired administration and a supportive school board, what might you create? What could be new? What could be different? What would be better?

A School That Welcomes Collaboration

From gaining the input of the parents and students through survey research, to utilizing their input through committee-work to create, develop and establish our vision and programs, the new Sixth Grade Center looks to all partners to develop our new school. And it doesn't stop with the doors being opened. Parents will be encouraged to regularly participate in school programs, and their feedback will be used to modify and continuously develop these programs through on-going data collection.

A Warm and Welcoming Place to Learn

The physical design of our new school features natural sunlight and green spaces. It also takes on the reality of uniting many schools into one. More than anything, the Sixth Grade Center looks to create a developmentally appropriate "whole school" program that encourages intellectual growth, confidence-building and teamwork, as students enter their adolescent years. The interdisciplinary team approach will make a large school into a more comfortable and personal learning environment. Advisory and Organizational periods will meet the developmental needs of students, helping them navigate through a challenging curriculum *and* time of life. Students will be asked to participate in a team-based, overnight field trip that teaches them about the interdependent relationship we have with our physical environment, as well as the benefits of building friendships and teams. Finally, recognizing that the school experience shouldn't stop at the end of the academic day, the 6GC will offer multiple exciting afterschool activities geared to the interest of sixth graders – as determined by them. This robust program will provide opportunities to form friendships based on similar interests, like intramurals, interest-based clubs and community service opportunities.

A 21st Century Approach and a Connected World

A "one to one" device initiative that provides each student with the ability to communicate, collaborate and create in an on-line capacity, and an integrated approach to learning technology within the core disciplines, will prepare students for future learning. From an easy-to-use online management system that will help students (and parents) stay on top of assignments, to applications that help students to collaborate with teachers and each other, the 6GC will utilize up to date resources.

Students will not only make connections to our local community through environmental education and service opportunities, they will also begin to study World Languages to prepare them for success in the global marketplace.

An Engaging Learning Environment

The cornerstone for the DASD 6GC curriculum is not just what students will learn, but, more importantly, how they learn it. The 6GC has adopted an inquiry-centered, project-based approach to learning that engages the learner by making them an active seeker, assimilator and creator of knowledge. Teachers will utilize essential questions when planning new learning, and utilize inquiry to intrigue and engage the learner. Lessons will utilize the added time of a modified block schedule period that will provide opportunities for students to solve real-world problems. This approach leads to learning that is remembered, and, more importantly, used to build more learning.

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The 6GC will feature a Technology Education course that teaches the foundations of engineering by problem-solving through student invention; World Language courses that utilize immersive storytelling and physical movement to promote language acquisition; an integrated approach to learning 21st Century digital technology; a Wellness course that emphasizes the connection between exercise and healthy choices; and an interdisciplinary core subject team approach that will utilize multiple connected units each year.

An Individually Responsive School

Transitioning from the elementary school and to the middle schools will be challenging for students. There are more and more choices for students and families each year as they progress through our K-12 program. Principals and guidance counselors will work with our parents and partner schools to program for students, making sure they are appropriately-challenged.

In an effort to meet the individual needs of learners, the 6GC will feature of full range of Special Education services. With a gifted program for gifted learners, low-incidence programs for students with challenging or multiple disabilities, our philosophy puts a premium on inclusion and meeting individual goals. The scaffolding for skills necessary for success in our high schools' Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses will be constructed at the Sixth Grade Center. Our guidance counselors will deliver classroom lessons and also meet individually with sixth graders. We will make every effort to meet the needs of each and every one of our students.

The Downingtown Area School District's Sixth Grade Center will open its doors in the fall of 2014.

If you are interested in learning more about our new school, please contact Tom Mulvey, 6GC Principal @ tmulvey@dasd.org.