English
During the first two months of school, students engaged in a study of identity in English class. We looked at the ways in which authors portray characters in the short stories they craft, compelling students to examine their own emerging identities. Jumping off from their summer study of Shakespeare’s Secret, students started the year reading a collection of short stories by authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Amy Tan, Ray Bradbury, Toni Cade Bambara and others. Students read and analyzed these stories to gain a deeper understanding of characterization, figurative and descriptive language, dialogue, short story elements and plot development. Students have begun to annotate literary pieces in order to identify salient themes, imagery, evidence and claims.

Students have been reading independently and writing entries about their self-selected books. Each student keeps track of the books they have read on their “Reading Recipe” cards. Additionally, students have begun to explore different writing styles, including a personal memoir, and a fictional narrative. Through assignments involving personal artifacts and an in depth examination of stereotypes in advertising, students have explored the difference between assumptions and observations, learning to specifically distinguish between the subjective and the objective in their own writing.

Mathematics
This semester, Grade 6 mathematics began with a review of pre-algebra skills, namely mathematical properties, order of operations and whole number operations. Students also learned what a variable is, and how to evaluate expressions. To solve one-step equations, students used strategies such as guess and check, and inverse operations. Students reviewed decimals and the properties of the base ten system, and applied decimal operations to stock market analysis, different base systems and other real world applications.

Students were assessed on these topics through homework, classwork, projects, checkpoints and quizzes. Students were given a choice to take on more challenging material with many of the assignments and quizzes offered.

Performing Arts: Elective
Every fall, each student is given the unique opportunity to participate in a Performing Arts Elective. The following ensembles are offered: Instrumental Ensemble, Dance Ensemble, Concert Choir, Concert Band, Drama and Jazz Ensemble. Groups are comprised of students from the entire middle division, and each group will have the opportunity to perform at two evening concerts during the school year. Students are expected to participate actively with a positive and respectful attitude, be prepared with instruments or other necessary materials, take risks willingly and demonstrate that they’ve made personal progress with regard to relevant skills.
Performing Arts: Music
In music the students will continue to review and solidify skills in several fundamentals of music, including rhythm, instrument technique, and vocal technique. Students will continue to work toward proper technique on both pitched and un-pitched percussion instruments. Emphasizing technique will allow ease and comfort when improvising. Improvisation, an original expression of oneself, will be studied as a component to the 6th grade concept of Identity. Students will sing throughout the fall semester, and focus will be placed on good breath support, proper vowel placement, and annunciation.

Science
The Grade 6 science curriculum began with an investigation of water. Through a project-based learning approach students performed experiments, collected and analyzed data, developed models and constructed scientific understandings. They were consistently challenged to articulate complex ideas both verbally and in writing. During the study we examined the structure of atoms and molecules, studied the states of matter, explored the water cycle and investigated the path of water as it flows into and out of New York City.

We used a data set provided by the American Museum of Natural History and the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies to study the freshwater tidal part of the Hudson and to investigate the effect of the invasion of zebra mussels on the ecosystem. We took part in the Hudson River Snapshot project, a day where schools, colleges and scientist cooperate to collect data all along the river. We went on to focus on weather systems, grappling with the concepts of heat transfer, pressure change and relative humidity. Throughout the semester, students used scientific tools and technology to carry out their investigations.

Social Emotional Learning
The Life Skills curriculum provides opportunities for students to participate in discussions regarding issues impacting positive social interactions. Students progress toward objectives in areas of self-awareness, self-management, social skills, relationship management, decision-making, and responsibility. During Grade 6 Life Skills classes, students learn, discuss, and practice strategies related to a range of topics including; street smarts, nutrition, hygiene, conflict resolution, puberty, sexuality, relationships, media literacy and cyber safety.

Social Studies
The year began with a unit in which students explored their personal histories as individuals and as part of a collective. Students engaged in various projects that focused on analyzing their personal identities and how being a part of this diverse city affects ritual and tradition. They thought about how one might learn about who they are by observing their personal artifacts and constructing histories to explain them. Through the study and analysis of advertising and current events, students also learned about the dangers of making assumptions, expressing bias, and believing stereotypes. Students began their study of the monotheistic religions, and have learned effective note-taking skills.

Spanish Language/Literacy
This semester in sixth grade students started by learning different ways to greet each other in Spanish and creating “greeting dialogues”. Students also created their own biographical poems in Spanish. They learned ways to put together information about themselves by analyzing different ways to use pronouns and verbs while writing the poems. We integrated technology by recording them in Photo Booth. This allowed students to listen to their pronunciation and their classmates’ work. Students connected to our study of Mecca.
through an exploration of the history of important cities in Islamic Spain. They compared maps of present
day Spain to Al-Andalus, looked at the Alhambra, and took a virtual tour of the site describing and answering
questions about what they saw. Skill-wise, students learned to use important regular and irregular verbs and
how to make sure that adjectives and nouns agreed. We studied basic questions and built vocabulary through
activities requiring listening, reading and speaking skills.

Visual Arts
The sixth graders began the fall semester with an examination of the grade-wide theme of Identity. Students
experimented with ways to visually represent who they are by creating personal geographies of themselves.
They were encouraged to use a variety of drawing techniques and materials to create these works. Next, we
began a study of observational drawing through facial features. We paid close attention to line, size, shape,
value and texture to express the varying facial features. Students then used these skills to create their self-
portrait drawing, which will become the basis for a painted self-portrait.

Wellness
This semester’s wellness classes have emphasized the importance of cooperation and utilizing effective
communication strategies to help students learn as a community. They have begun learning about the five
health-related fitness components and how those apply to their identity. Students illustrated their
understanding of their health through their personal health identity online blog. Students worked on basic
skills; they learned the rules and parameters of an activity and took part in a culminating activity. During this
process they learned about social and personal responsibility. More specifically, the students learned about
volleyball.