What are some changes I can expect as my student begins 6th grade?

Beginning middle school is a big transition for students. Up until now, students have had a primary teacher as their main teacher. They have their own desk, fewer transitions, and teacher expectations to manage. There will be a period of adjustment as students adapt. Parents, expect students to be slightly overwhelmed with their new schedules.

As the curriculum intensifies, homework assignments in middle school can become more numerous especially since there is a potential foreign language component added. In order to avoid overscheduling, transitioning to middle school is a good time to consider the amount of planned after-school activities. Remember, as your children enter into adolescence, with all of the complexities and joy this will bring, balance becomes key for everyone.

What is SchoolLoop?

Each parent and student is asked to register for SchoolLoop, our school's communication system between home and school. Please make sure that you and your student have registered for your SchoolLoop accounts at: le-llesd-ca.schoolloop.com. Please be sure to have your child's student I.D. before you begin the setup process. (Student ID numbers can be found on your child's schedule.) SchoolLoop offers more than just a calendar and grades; it also hosts individual teacher websites complete with resources to help your child throughout the year.

Teachers update their SchoolLoop Grade Books a minimum of once a week and updated grades are published on Tuesdays. Published grades allow parents to identify missing assignments (a zero placeholder will be submitted in lieu of a numerical score). Parents and students can also email teachers and administration via SchoolLoop.

Will my 6th grader feel confused by the middle school schedule and multiple teachers’ expectations and procedures?

Many sixth-graders find that their first year with a middle school schedule can be challenging to manage; however, it is amazing how fast middle schoolers adapt to changing classes. After a week or so, students visibly relax.

Although SchoolLoop is an excellent resource, it is important that students use their school-issued planners for the most current up-to-date classroom due dates and happenings. To facilitate success, sixth-grade teachers dedicate time toward organizational skills.

Parents are encouraged to also dedicate a consistent period of time at home to review with their child what has to be completed and how best to manage time. Between school and home efforts, a new sixth-grader’s organizational and time management
skills will improve as they progress through the Fall months of school.

As sixth-graders develop, self-advocacy is another skill that is intentionally discussed. Self-advocacy takes time to learn, and children learn this skill at different rates. Parents can reach out to teachers, academic counselors, and administration for support on how best to help their child to advocate for themselves during sixth-grade. Small steps in self-advocacy during sixth-grade typically lead to a confident eighth-grader who is well-prepared to handle the rigor and expectations of any high school program.

**Do 6th graders use planners?**

All sixth-graders will use their planners daily. All teachers will build in time during their class time for sixth-graders to use their planners. Lost planners can be purchased from the front office for $5.00. A planner can be another communication tool between teacher and parent on assignments.

**What time is school for my 6th grader?**

Middle school classes start at 8:05 a.m. and end at 2:50 p.m. This is five minutes earlier and ten minutes later than the 4/5 bell schedule. Attendance is taken during the beginning of each class period, so students must be on time to all their classes throughout the school day. Please make a strong effort to get your child to school on time.

**What will a 6th grade student’s schedule look like?**

Students no longer have a self-contained classroom, but will now experience six different teachers throughout the school day. A sixth-grade schedule might look like:

- Core for three periods (Reading, Writing, and Social Studies)
- Math
- Science
- Physical Education
- Two elective classes (i.e., Foreign Language, Band, Art, etc.).

Classes are divided into eight periods. La Entrada's middle school schedule, a rotating schedule, looks like the following (posted on La Entrada’s homepage):

- Mondays = 42-minute classes for periods 1-8.
- Tuesday through Friday = 56-minute classes for six rotating periods.

In the spring, fifth-graders learn about middle school electives and they make their top choices. By the end of the fifth-grade, they know what elective they will attend. On minimum days, all students are dismissed at 11:30 a.m.; lunch is not served on these days. Minimum days are listed on the 2018-2019 district academic calendar and will be consistently announced via the Leopard Spot, the school newsletter.
How can I see what assignments my child is missing?

A zero in SchoolLoop indicates missing work. Teachers may need more time to enter grades for some assignments, but they are committed to listing missing assignments weekly to help support parents who are concerned that their child may not be completing the required assignments.

How can my child ask for a change in their class schedule?

If your child’s schedule is missing a class, or classes are incorrectly scheduled (two science classes, for instance), parents are asked to contact the school immediately, so the schedule can be corrected prior to the first day of school.

Changing electives is a different process. Students are asked to complete a *Change of Schedule Form* (form located in both the front office and the counselor’s room - room 7), have parents sign the form, and return the form to room 7.

Counselors will make every effort to accommodate elective changes within the first two weeks of school. In teachers’ experience, once a student has attended several days in the elective class that they initially thought they would not like, the student ends up feeling good about the class and chooses to stay. Parents are encouraged to ask their child to be patient with any elective class change requests, and to be aware that an elective change could affect an entire schedule.

What are the elective class opportunities for 6th graders?

Each sixth-grader will have an opportunity to choose up to two electives for their schedule. Elective choices include:

- Foreign Language (French, Latin, Spanish or Mandarin)
- The paired classes of Art/Drama (two quarters each)
- The combo classes of Art/Drama/Band. Band class is an every other day class.
  - Students will be scheduled into Band on one day (Day A) and either Art or Drama on the alternating day (Day B). This may seem confusing, but students quickly understand the A-Day/B-Day schedule, and our music program benefits from this set-up.
- Additional electives include Math Support.

Are Parent Information Night (PIN) and Open House different for 6th graders?

Parent Information Night (PIN) and Open House are held on the same dates as the fourth and fifth-grade PIN. Students will bring home a hard copy of their daily class schedule for their parents to follow. Parents are encouraged to attend all PIN presentations to learn more about the teacher and curriculum.

During Open House, all classrooms are open during an allotted evening time, so that parents can celebrate their child’s year’s worth of achievement.
What is brunch time?

All middle school students enjoy a daily morning brunch period where students can eat a snack (either brought from home or purchased from the Student Store), visit their lockers, visit the restrooms, or visit with friends. If a middle school student would like to purchase a snack, LE’s Student Store is open twice a week during brunch and snacks can be purchased for $1.00 - $2.00 per item. The store will open in mid-to-late September and may expand to being open more days per week as the school year progresses.

When and where do 6th graders eat lunch?

All sixth, seventh and eighth-graders utilize the same lunch period and are supervised by adults and administration. Students are to eat their lunch at the lunch tables.

What other activities go on during lunch recess?

Events that happen during lunch recess include:

- Spirit Activities
- Intramural Games
- Leopard’s Lounge (twice a week)
- La Entrada Lunch Enrichment sessions (once a week)

If the library and computer lab are available, students may also visit these rooms during lunch recess.

What do 6th graders do with the lockers provided?

Each sixth-grader will be provided a school locker to utilize for school textbooks and supplies. The following times are ideal to use the locker:

- Before school
- During brunch
- During the five-minute passing period before and after lunch

Teachers will work with students on how to properly open their lockers the first week of school. Parents are encouraged to also practice the art of opening a locker with their child when on campus. Students are not to use lockers during class time.

Lockers replace the dedicated desk familiar to elementary students. Students are to keep their locker combinations private and are asked to not share their combinations with any of their friends. If students forget their locker combination, their core teacher, or the office secretaries can provide them with their combination.

Are backpacks still used in 6th grade?
Middle school students do use backpacks and are expected to keep the majority of their supplies/textbooks in their lockers throughout the day. Students are responsible for their backpacks and contents and are discouraged from leaving their backpacks unattended.

**Please be aware that all rolling backpacks will be expected to be carried up and down the indoor stairways in our new building due to the destructive nature they present when rolled up or down stairs.**

**What are the homework expectations for 6th graders?**

Homework is an essential part of the educational program in the Las Lomitas School District. Homework serves the purpose of providing:

- Important practice and refinement of skills taught in the classroom.
- Preparation for a concept that will be studied in the near future.
- Elaboration, enrichment and extension of school learning experiences.
- Independent practice of proper study habits taught in school.
- Opportunity for increasing self-direction, time-management, and independence.

The approved School Board daily homework time expectation for sixth-grade is 90-minutes. These times might be increased for students who choose the Geometry math sequence and/or electives that require homework. In addition, extra credit assignments are not required, and are therefore not reflected in the time expectations. Please recognize that the time a student spends on homework will vary based on factors that include student readiness and the homework environment.

**What should I do if my child is having difficulties early in the year with exceeding homework time limits or catching up after absences?**

Parents need to contact their child’s teacher(s) as soon as difficulties arise. The La Entrada staff can offer suggestions and solutions. Communicating with teachers when tough situations arise avoids unnecessary stress. Each child handles their difficulties differently and only parents know best when their child is experiencing concerns that require adult intervention. In addition, La Entrada has two academic counselors to assist you and your child if needed.

**How are report cards different in middle school?**

Middle school is divided into four 9-week quarter grading periods. Letter grades are earned for each subject. Sixth-graders will receive one Language Arts (English) grade and one Social Studies grade.

**How are 6th grade conferences organized?**

Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled on minimum days. The majority of sixth-grade teachers ask that students be present in their Parent/Teacher Conference. Fall conferences occur in November and Spring conferences happen in March.
Spring conferences are on an as needed basis, and are intended for students who are struggling or need some extra help and support (C and below). Families of students who are achieving A’s or B’s, or have no academic concerns, do not need to sign up for a conference during the spring.

How do I sign up for a Parent/Teacher Conference?

Parents must sign up online for their Fall and Spring Parent/Teacher Conferences. PTC Wizard is the web-based Parent/Teacher Conference scheduling system used by La Entrada School and accessible on the school website. Notices are posted in the Leopard Spot and on SchoolLoop informing parents when Parent/Teacher sign-ups will begin.

Parents are to login to https://llesdms.ptcwizard.com and register and enter the name of their sixth-grader.

The PTC Wizard program will ask parents to follow steps on how to schedule a conference with a teacher.

A confirmation email will be sent to parents once they've completed registration.

If a teacher's time slots are full, please call the office to be placed on a waitlist. School secretaries, Zee Ahmad and Marie Stosz, are happy to help if the online system does not seem to be working.

What is the placement procedure for 6th graders in their math class?

At the end of fifth-grade, all students are administered the fifth-grade standards test (a paper/pencil Math in Focus Common Core curriculum and performance-task test) and the sixth-grade standards test (a paper/paper pencil test from the Big Ideas Common Core curriculum). These two assessment results, in addition to state testing results, are used when making placement decisions. Then sixth-graders are scheduled into either a sixth-grade regular math class, a sixth-grade honors math class, or a seventh-grade Pre-Algebra honors math class.

What is the 6th grade Physical Education program?

Physical Education meets four times a week within LE’s rotating schedule. Students need to come to class prepared for physical activity with appropriate clothing, which is comprised of athletic shoes and socks.

What are La Entrada dances like?

Middle school dances occur quarterly on Friday evenings from 7 p.m.- 9:00 p.m. Tickets are sold during lunch recess for $5.00 with Student ID and $6.00 without Student ID the Wednesday and Thursday prior to the dance. On the day of the dance, tickets are sold at lunch for $6.00 with Student ID or $7.00 without. Tickets will only be sold to students who have a signed parent permission slip. No tickets will be sold at the
door. This is an important fact to remember.

Students are not allowed to arrive early to a dance or leave early from a dance without specific parent permission and administration approval. Your child’s safety is La Entrada’s first priority. If a student has purchased a dance ticket, but ends up not attending the dance, parents are asked to email Mrs. Dineen, the Assistant Principal (sdineen@llesd.org), so the attendance roster will accurately reflect which students are present. Parent dance chaperones are a must in order for the school to provide a school dance, so all interested parents are encouraged to contact Mrs. Webster (twebster@llesd.org) to sign up for a shift. Chaperone shifts are: 6:45 p.m.-8:15 p.m. and 8:15 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

**What are some traditional school events parents should plan on attending?**

Throughout the year, opportunities for parents to visit your child’s classroom will be advertised via your child’s teachers’ SchoolLoop notices/newsletters or email messages. The PTA newsletter, the *Leopard Spot*, is emailed out every Sunday evening. This newsletter shares schoolwide events and important messages. Register with the PTA to receive the *Leopard Spot*. Here are a few important events to note in your calendar:

- Parent Information Night (PIN), September 13, is an evening event where parents can learn about teachers’ expectations and curriculum.
- The Family Picnic is a PTA sponsored event held early Fall. This year’s PTA sponsored Family Picnic is on Thursday, October 4, 2018 beginning at 5:30 p.m.
- Drama Productions are held at least once each year. More information will be forthcoming.
- Music concerts are held during December and May.
- Annual Geography Bee, Spelling Bee, and Science Fair competitions are announced in the *Leopard Spot*.
- Parent Education events are held throughout the year on specific topics.
- Stay tuned to the *Leopard Spot* and emails from the District and/or administration about more upcoming events held throughout the year.