

West Woods Upper Elementary School

Curriculum Guide

Alicia Bowman, Principal

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

The mission of West Woods Upper Elementary School is to challenge all students to meet high academic standards and to help them become responsible and caring community members. Each year, we continue to refine our school vision and move closer to our goal: to become a high performing school in the middle grades where “all students learn to use their minds well; where the standards are high for all students; where high quality teaching and challenging classes are offered to every child, along with extra help and support for those who need them; and where the unique challenges faced by young adolescents are respected and such needs are not seen as outside the school’s purview.” (*Turning Points 2000*) Another important goal for West Woods is to create a strong bridge between the elementary schools and the middle school and to provide careful transitions for students across levels.

This guide has been prepared to give parents/guardians and students an overview of the curriculum—the academic standards and the subject matter taught—at West Woods Upper Elementary School. Farmington has a strong, comprehensive, standards-based K-12 curriculum, which includes sequential instruction in language arts, social studies, science, mathematics, world languages, the arts, health, and physical education. This program of studies describes in brief the expectations, core subjects, and experiences that each student will meet in grades five and six.

We hope that this curriculum guide adds to your understanding of the Farmington curriculum and encourages you to continue with us as partners in the education of your children. We look forward to your active involvement at West Woods next year.

Alicia Bowman
Principal



West Woods Upper Elementary School Mission

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West Woods Guiding Beliefs

About Students

All students can learn at high levels.

All students should feel individually known, cared for, nurtured, and safe.

Every student should feel connected to at least one school adult.

Instruction should be challenging and engaging, relevant to the concerns of preadolescents and based on how they learn best. (*Turning Points 2000*)

About Outcomes

Students should understand that effort and strategic, hard work are the main determinants of school success.

Students should be respectful.

Students should be proficient readers, writers, and communicators.

Students should know how to ask good questions and find answers.

Students should be willing to take appropriate risks, accept challenges, and reflect on their academic and social growth.

About The Learning Community

The school is a community of learners, a partnership among teachers, students, and parents, which supports student learning and healthy development.

Student learning is our chief priority; improving our knowledge and skills is essential to raising student achievement.

Collaboration is essential to our success; working together strengthens us and enhances achievement.

The faculty and staff should understand and value each other's work and be respectful, flexible, open minded, and good-humored.

Farmington Board of Education Philosophy

The Farmington Public Schools are committed to the belief that all children are capable of attaining high levels of educational achievement in preparation for productive, rewarding lives and responsible citizenship. Students will reach this goal through their own diligence and effort, and through a school and school district learning climate that responds to individual student academic needs, a curriculum that challenges, adequate resources, and skilled, professional instruction. Furthermore, a belief in social equality underlies Farmington's commitment to providing a high quality of education for all students.

Farmington Board of Education Mission

The mission of the Farmington Public Schools is to enable all students to achieve academic and personal excellence, exhibit persistent effort and live as resourceful, inquiring and contributing global citizens.



Literacy

The goal of the West Woods Literacy Program is to help students become skillful, confident, lifelong readers and writers, who use language effectively for communication, enjoyment, and pleasure. The program at West Woods addresses all components of literacy—reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing—and builds on and solidifies the skills learned in the early elementary grades.

Grades Five and Six Reading

Students in grades five and six continue to build a repertoire of reading skills and strategies during the daily reading workshop. In both grades students are expected to read increasingly complex texts and communicate comprehension orally and in writing with growing sophistication. Upper elementary readers refine their ability to use comprehension strategies, read with fluency, understand vocabulary, and apply word-solving strategies.

Upper elementary level students continue to develop comprehension skills through genre study. They learn to express initial understandings as well as deep interpretations; to identify and infer relationships among characters, setting, and events; and to make personal and critical connections between texts and themselves. Fifth and sixth grade students are expected to read more non-fiction text than in earlier grades. This emphasis on informational text provides an opportunity for readers to refine comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas and relationships, locating and summarizing information, and drawing conclusions supported with text evidence.

Student progress toward meeting grade level standard in reading is determined by performance on common assessment tasks, review of a collection of writing in response to their reading, and teacher observations of classroom reading discussions. In both grades, students achieve grade level reading standard when they are able to read typical grade level texts with appropriate interpretation and analysis. They show their understanding through oral responses during discussions and by adequately answering a range of comprehension questions about texts both orally and in writing. Each year students in both grades are expected to read approximately 30 - 40 books representing a variety of fiction and non-fiction choices. In addition, students are encouraged to set their own goals for improving reading and to develop strong independent reading habits.



Grades Five and Six Reading Acceleration

Students who are making limited progress toward grade level reading standards are identified for participation in additional explicit, systematic small group strategic reading instruction designed to improve reading achievement. Acceleration instruction is tailored to individual student needs and emphasizes literal and inferential comprehension of both fiction and non-fiction text.

Grades Five and Six Writing

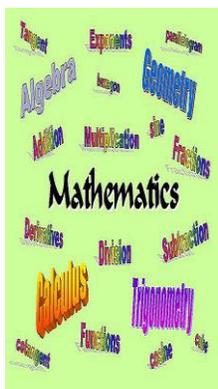
Students in grades five and six continue to develop fluency with the writing process while also learning to express increasingly sophisticated thinking. They brainstorm to discover meaningful topics, select appropriate organizational plans, and produce and revise multiple drafts. They learn to incorporate the traits of good writing—focus, organization, elaboration, fluency, and conventions—into their pieces by studying the exemplar work of published writers and by giving and receiving feedback as they confer with peers and teachers.

Within a writing workshop model, students have daily opportunities to write for different audiences, for specific purposes, and in a variety of genres. The emphasis in grades five and six is on developing each student's ability to independently engage in the writing process. Students learn to compose in a variety of forms including narratives, informational pieces, and opinion/argument essays.

Student progress toward meeting grade level standard in writing is measured by examining a collection of work to determine whether writing traits have been applied using a writing process that results in a clearly conveyed message. Further, students are encouraged to set their own goals for improving writing and to use written expression as a tool to clarify and share thinking about new ideas and understandings.



Mathematics



The goals of the Mathematics Program at West Woods are to help students' value mathematics and become successful *problem solvers* and clear communicators of mathematical thinking. In grades five and six, students continue to develop mathematical proficiency through a range of instructional experiences. Assessment is multi-faceted (classwork, homework, journals, quizzes, projects, tests, performance assessments) and offers students a variety of ways to demonstrate mathematical understandings. Students are taught using a balanced approach which emphasizes deep understanding of concepts from a number of perspectives, procedural skill and fluency, and numerous opportunities for application of content and practices.

Grade Five Mathematics

In fifth grade, students focus on fluency and developing understanding in three critical areas: multiplying and dividing fractions as well as their relationship to decimals, extending division to 2 digit divisors of whole numbers as well as decimals, and measuring volume and relating it to multiplication and division. In addition to the critical areas, 5th grade students develop an understanding of writing and interpreting numerical expressions, using place value to read, write, compare, and perform operations with decimals, convert measurements, represent and interpret data, graph points on a coordinate plane in order to solve real world problems, and classify two-dimensional figures into categories based on properties. Students experience a problem solving approach to mathematics based on everyday situations and use a variety of 21st century skills to interact with mathematics.

Grade Six Mathematics

In sixth grade, students focus on fluency and developing understanding in four critical areas: using ratio and rate to solve problems, solidifying concepts about the number system through division of fractions and applying and extending previous understandings of numbers to the system of rational numbers (especially negative numbers), writing, interpreting, using expressions and equations, and statistical thinking. In addition to the critical areas, 6th grade students develop an understanding of concepts about our number system including computing fluently with multi-digit numbers, finding common factors and multiples, and extending previous understandings of numbers to the system of rational numbers. Students also solve real world problems involving area, surface area, and volume. Students experience a problem solving approach to mathematics based on everyday situations and use a variety of 21st century skills to interact with mathematics.

Grade Six Advanced Mathematics

Students are enrolled in the sixth grade Advanced Math class based on two district benchmark assessments, numerous chapter assessments, teacher recommendation, report card information and effort grades. Advanced Math is a challenging program that covers the same content standards as Grade Six Mathematics. It is, however, faster paced and more abstract than Math 6. It is expected for students to be highly proficient with computation skills, possess excellent work and study habits, and be highly motivated to learn mathematics.

Science

The goal of the Science Program at West Woods is to engage students in the practices of science and engineering as they explore scientific phenomena and big ideas. As a result, students will be curious about their world, possess enough knowledge about science and engineering to engage in discussions on important issues, and be critical consumers of scientific information related to their lives.

Grade Five Science



Ecosystems

In the Ecosystems unit, students are introduced to the cross-cutting concepts of matter and energy. They learn about the interdependence of organisms by studying how energy flows and matter cycles in an ecosystem. Students build an eco-column that consists of a terrarium and aquarium. While studying this model, they work on forming and distinguishing between facts, opinions, inferences/conclusions, observations, and evidence. Students also work as inquiry teams to study a topic of interest related to ecology. To develop an understanding of local ecosystems, students connect with naturalists at Roaring Brook Nature Center and Winding Trails.

Light and Sound

During our unit on sound and light energy, fifth graders participate in inquiry style lessons that guide them to study the characteristics of sound and light. They ask questions, explore, and use models to develop an understanding of waves, pitch, color, absorption, reflection, and refraction. In order to understand how people manipulate light and sound to make them useful, children study instruments, mirrors, and lenses. In collaborative teams, students learn about the engineering design process as they design and build optical instruments using light sources, mirrors, lenses, and everyday objects such as boxes and cardboard tubes. Throughout the unit, students discuss and revisit key ideas about energy, such as where it comes from and how it changes form.

Fair Testing

After much experience with asking questions and designing investigations, students focus on “cause-effect” or “fair test” questions. They learn that in order to collect accurate data during an investigation, scientists must change only one variable and keep all the others constant. They design investigations that incorporate multiple trials and work on creating data tables, analyzing data, and drawing conclusions.

Earth and Space Cycles

Patterns exist both on Earth and in space. During this unit, students examine four cycles: the water cycle, the rock cycle, the day/night cycle, and the lunar cycle. Fifth graders study these cycles while developing their skills of observing, testing, and developing/using models.

Grade Six Science

Energy

In fifth grade, students learned about light energy, sound energy, and the transfer of energy in ecosystems. Sixth graders build upon these concepts by exploring forms of energy (potential and kinetic) and by developing an understanding of the role that energy plays in our everyday lives.

Earth Phenomenon

Sixth graders explore several phenomena related to the Earth. For example, how can it be summer in Connecticut and winter in Uruguay at the same time? Why is the Atacama Desert the driest (nonpolar) place on Earth? In the context of studying these phenomena, sixth graders learn concepts related to physical science and earth science. More specifically, they learn what causes the seasons, what variables affect weather and climate around the world, and how heat affects matter. In terms of scientific practices, students will further develop their skills of developing models and constructing explanations.

Human Impact

During this unit, sixth graders begin with an introduction to the impact of a growing population on Earth's resources. They learn about the four interconnected spheres of the Earth: land, water, air, and life. Next, sixth graders closely study the impact of an oil spill on each of the spheres. After learning about various clean-up methods, students engage in the engineering process in order to design and create a method to clean up an oil spill.

Simple Machines (Technology)

In this unit, students explore the relationships among force, distance, and work. They conduct scientific investigations in order to learn how simple machines (inclined planes, pulleys, and levers) are used to create mechanical advantage. Throughout the unit, students are learning to integrate information from multiple sources (first-hand investigations, video clips, and text). After learning about how people use technology to make their work seem easier, students discuss the need for "automaticity" and engage in a series of lessons on "coding."



Social Studies

The primary goal of the Social Studies Program at West Woods is to prepare students to function as effective citizens in a democratic society and a globally interdependent world. In fifth and sixth grade, students will engage in the inquiry process as they develop understanding of civics, economics, geography, and history. They will expand their core knowledge of our nation's heritage, learn to understand and appreciate other cultures, and acquire social science concepts and skills that will help them become lifelong learners and productive citizens.

Grade Five Social Studies

Farmington vs. Slavery

Students in fifth grade begin by studying the history of our town through a unit called "Farmington vs. Slavery." They discuss civil rights, multiple perspectives about slavery in our country, and how people took action to change the laws.

Immigration

Fifth graders continue their studies through a unit about immigration. They learn about why people migrate, the effects of assimilation on cultures, the contributions of groups that shaped American culture, and the benefits and challenges of living in a multicultural society. The unit culminates with an exciting "Immigration Fair" during which students share their learning and work with families.



Grade Six Social Studies

Global Citizenship

Sixth graders begin the year with a unit on global citizenship. They learn that a global citizen investigates the world, studies issues from multiple perspectives, communicates effectively, and takes informed action. Students learn about globalization and its impact on how people live. They also have the opportunity to work with a team of students to investigate a global issue of interest, present their learning, and propose a way to take local action.

Latin America

Students begin this unit by engaging in an inquiry project about the ancient civilizations of the Aztec, Maya, and Inca. They study the history of the Spanish Conquest from different perspectives. Sixth graders also learn about how geography affects the lives of people in Latin America. As they study the cultures of Latin America, students learn how the products and practices of a people are based upon their perspectives (values and beliefs).

Africa

Finally, students explore Africa and the current challenges that Africans face in our global society. Students examine how key decisions impact the future of the people in the region and our world. They continue to develop their skills of studying issues from multiple perspectives, developing an opinion, and supporting it with evidence.

World Languages

Our Mission

The mission of the Farmington World Language Program is for students to communicate in another language, understand and appreciate cultural differences, and participate in or contribute to a global society. Students understand how language learning can benefit their personal and professional life.

Our Core Beliefs

- All students should become proficient in more than one language.
- All students should become interculturally competent in order to participate in, and contribute to a global society.
- Students' lives are enriched because the study of the language allows them to form meaningful relationships with people throughout the world.

Our Goal

The primary goal of the World Language Program at West Woods is to prepare students to be successful in the 21st century world by communicating, collaborating and connecting with people from different backgrounds. Students may choose to study either French or Spanish. Instruction and practice include comprehension and communication through listening, speaking, reading, writing and culture. Students attend world language classes three days a week. By the end of sixth grade, students will have completed Level 1 of the district's sequentially articulated language program.

Grades Five and Six French

In grades five and six, students learn to communicate in French about a variety of topics that relate to their personal lives and interests. In addition, students become familiar with many aspects of the French-speaking world, primarily Quebec and France. By the end of Level 1 French, students will be able to understand and to communicate in the target language about themselves, about their likes and dislikes, their school routines and lifestyles, their homes, families, and communities.

Grades Five and Six Spanish

In grades five and six, students learn to communicate about a variety of topics that relate to their personal lives and interests. In addition, students become familiar with many aspects of the Spanish-speaking world. By the end of Level 1 Spanish, students will be able to understand and to communicate in the target language about themselves, about their likes and dislikes, their school routines and lifestyles, their homes, families, and communities.



Technology



The goal of the Technology Program at West Woods is to develop 21st century technology users who can select appropriate software tools for a given task, maintain and organize their files, and be responsible and ethical users with regards to personal computers, networks, and the Internet. Technology skills are integrated into the curriculum across all content areas and students in both grades five and six are exposed to software applications that enhance their technology competence as well as their knowledge and academic skills.

Grades Five and Six Technology

The Technology Program in grades five and six continue to develop and enhance students' basic technology skills in communication, information accessing, data analysis, and ethical and responsible use of technology services. Students in both grades will continue to improve their keyboarding skills in an effort to meet the goal of 30 w.p.m. with 90% accuracy. Technology is integrated into all content areas. For example, in language arts students use word processing to improve process writing and to design brochures and newsletters. In mathematics and science, students use spreadsheets to graph data from surveys and research as well as use multimedia tools to create oral presentations. Students also have opportunities to work with composition software in music as well as drawing and design software in art.

Online safety is introduced in fifth grade and revisited again in sixth grade. Fifth grade students learn how to keep themselves and their personal information safe. Building upon what they learned in fifth grade, sixth graders continue to develop their understanding of online safety, responsible online behavior, and digital citizenship.

Library/Media



The Library Program fosters the habit, appreciation and love of reading through scheduled book exchange times, book talks, book fairs, author visits and special reading programs, such as Nutmeg Book Award and Battle of the Books.

Visual Arts



The mission of the Farmington Public School's Fine and Applied Arts Department is to prepare students with skills and conceptual understanding that enable them to be innovative, confident thinkers, able to create personal art and design with highly competitive real-world applications, an awareness of contemporary visual culture and media and a deep appreciation of global art and design throughout time.

The vision for our K-12 program is to offer classes where students are known well, nurtured by caring adults, and have choices about how and what they learn. Learning is experiential and active with time for explorations of interdisciplinary subjects through the arts. Within broad topics for exploration, the curriculum is goal-oriented, sequential and developmentally appropriate. Beginning each unit of study with inquiry, students are taught to analyze art from a variety of perspectives and to be critical thinkers of the world around them. Students make connections with community partners and present their work annually to stakeholders. Through project-based learning, students learn to collaborate, take creative risks and advocate for their work in front of an authentic audience.

Music



The primary goal of the Music Program at West Woods is to help students become independent, lifelong musicians who understand how to use music for communication, cultural understanding, and personal enjoyment. Through active participation in a performing ensemble, students in grades five and six will deepen their understanding of the elements of music and the three musical processes: creating, performing, and responding. In addition to being challenged to meet high standards of musical achievement, students will also be asked to demonstrate their ability to think critically, collaborate, problem solve and be resourceful within the content area of music.

Students may choose to participate in one or two of our music ensembles: band, chorus, and orchestra. Co-curricular music offerings extend the music curriculum in both grades. Please note that in addition to their music ensemble class, students participating in band and orchestra will receive a 30-minute instrumental lesson each week.

Band - The Farmington Band Program begins in grade 5. At the end of fourth grade, students may choose to learn to play a woodwind, brass or percussion instrument. In addition to their 30-minute lesson, students will learn how to rehearse and perform together as an ensemble during band class.

Chorus – Students in chorus will focus on developing their singing voice, understanding the concept of singing in a choral ensemble and strengthening their music reading skills.

Orchestra – Orchestra at West Woods is a continuation of the orchestra program that started in each elementary school. Students will learn about music through participation in the orchestra and be challenged to meet high standards of both individual and ensemble performance.

Physical Education

The Physical Education Program at West Woods offers a structured sequence of learning experiences in both grades, which supports the development of a healthy lifestyle and related attitudes and dispositions. In fifth grade, students consolidate skills learned in the elementary grades and apply those skills to a wide variety of physical activities. In sixth grade, students deepen their understanding and application of basic and specialized movement skills. Fitness is a focus in both grades—understanding the importance of cardiovascular fitness, muscular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility in order to maintain good health. In both grades, students have physical education two days each week, and the intramural program is an extension of the physical education curriculum. Safety is of primary concern in all units.

Grade Five Physical Education

In fifth grade, students explore and improve personal fitness through increasingly complex games, group activities, and physical fitness testing. Students also use their accumulated knowledge of movement and basic skills to participate in a wide variety of team activities such as flag football, volleyball, badminton, basketball, Wiffle ball, lacrosse, track and field, line dancing, and gymnastics. Cooperative adventure activities are also included in the program.

Grade Six Physical Education

In sixth grade, students continue to develop skills and movement concepts at increasingly sophisticated levels. Students apply those skills, as well as related game strategies, to a broader range of team and individual sports. Fitness is incorporated into every sixth grade unit, and students learn about aerobic and muscular endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility as they improve their personal fitness. Sixth grade students are required to change clothes for physical education. All sixth grade students' fitness levels are assessed in the fall using the mandated State of Connecticut Fitness Test.



Health

The primary goal of the health education at West Woods is to teach young adolescents how to stay well—how to assess their individual habits and behaviors in order to make informed choices that will positively affect their well-being. Students are exposed to a blend of scientific facts, current research, and resources. They participate in class discussions and tasks that help them develop the life skills necessary for a healthy, responsible, and productive future.

Topics related to staying physically and emotionally healthy are integrated into the curriculum, and a few topics are studied more closely. In fifth grade, students learn about nutrition, the immune system, puberty, bullying, and media education. In sixth grade, students revisit and elaborate on concepts about bullying, and focus on good decision-making skills involving issues relevant to their lives.

School Counseling

The School Counseling Program at West Woods is staffed by one full time School Counselor, one full time clinical Social Worker and one part time School Psychologist. They are available to support the social and emotional needs of students and to help them reach their full potential. They work with students and families on school issues such as behavior, learning difficulties, relationships with adults and peers and crisis situations. They also address family problems that may interfere with academic performance such as abuse/neglect, divorce/separation and serious illness or death. They assist with transitions from the elementary schools to West Woods and from West Woods to Irving A. Robbins. They provide consultations to classroom teachers and help identify student needs through interviews, observations, and assessments. Counseling is provided during the school day both individually and in small groups by both the Social Worker and the School Counselor. Referrals to private therapists or community services are also provided when appropriate.

The School Counselor works primarily with sixth grade and teaches developmental school counseling lessons to grade six only. All of sixth grade is introduced to Naviance Succeed, an online tool used to assist students with their future planning. Naviance Succeed is where individual Student Success Plans are recorded each year. In addition, 6th grade begins career exploration by completing an online personality inventory that helps students realize what careers match their personality. The FPS counseling department is aligned 6 through 12 with developmentally appropriate lessons that support student success.

The Social Worker works primarily with families having difficulties and students who receive counseling services through an individual education program. The School Psychologist primarily completes assessments and evaluations for students with learning difficulties. If you would like to speak with one of the school counseling members, please email them or call the main office at West Woods.



Special Education

Special Education Services are designed to support student achievement in the least restrictive environment. Students receive specialized instruction and support within the general education classroom and/or resource room setting. Special education teachers collaborate and meet regularly with general education colleagues to carefully plan lessons. Teachers identify and implement effective instructional strategies while considering accommodations and modifications necessary for students to attain the goals and objectives specified on their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

When a teacher recognizes a student experiencing difficulty in school, he or she may refer the child to an intervention team. This team is comprised of general and special education teachers, literacy specialist and other special services staff who meet regularly to review achievement data and plan interventions for students. Through the intervention process, teachers work together to assess student needs, plan specific intervention(s), and monitor progress to determine student's response to intervention. If the student continues to have difficulty learning despite the tiered interventions, they may be referred to the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) for consideration of special education services.

The PPT may recommend a comprehensive educational evaluation be completed, and when results are examined, it may be found that the child qualifies for special education services. All students who receive special education services have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed collaboratively by teachers, related services personnel, administrators and parents. Goal and objectives are established and serve as a guide for specialized instruction. To the greatest extent possible, this instruction occurs in the general education classroom, where the classroom teacher works directly or in collaboration with the special education teacher to implement appropriate instructional accommodations and/or modifications. Students may also receive small group or individual instruction in a resource room depending on individual needs.

Special Services Team meetings occur weekly to discuss educational issues related to the unique academic and social needs of those students receiving special education. The school psychologist, social worker, guidance counselor, speech/language pathologist, special education teachers and administration participate in these meetings. Related service personnel work with students, faculty and parents to provide the necessary support services to maximize student learning opportunities at school. These support services generally include health services, counseling, community liaison work, evaluation and recommendations that facilitate student adjustment.

The special education process is designed to be a collaborative process that maximizes the effort and expertise of all professionals who know and work with students receiving special education services. The goal of this collaborative team is to provide a successful school experience for all students.



WEST WOODS UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HOMEWORK POLICY

Homework assignments should be purposeful and meaningful, and provide an opportunity for students to enhance their skills, to express concepts, to practice lessons learned in school, and to broaden and/or deepen their understanding of subject matter. Difficult or new work should be reserved for the classroom, with sufficient time allotted for explanation and reinforcement. A balance of long and short-term assignments should be offered to all students and where appropriate, homework should be tailored to the needs, levels, and interests of students. Homework should not be assigned as “busy” work or punishment.

Homework is intended to assist students in developing independent work habits. It is the student’s responsibility; parents should only see that it gets done. For students, homework provides an opportunity to establish a system of organizing materials, bringing them home, doing the assignment, and returning it to school on time. It is not expected that students will complete homework in school, and it is expected that both fifth and sixth graders will use a planner to support homework completion. West Woods will provide planners for all students.

The Farmington Board of Education policy on homework recommends about one hour daily in grade five and grade six. It is also expected that students will read independently at home each night for 20-30 minutes.

Students are not excused from regular classroom assignments because they are involved in extracurricular activities such as concerts, ski clubs, and sports.

Students will generally be given as many days to make up missed work as they were absent due to illness. Parents may call the school for homework after the **second** consecutive day of absence.

