



### *Day in the Life of a Sixth Grader*

This is Taylor's first year as a 6th grader at Artesian, and this is the first year of the school. It has only been 4 months since she started, but she has no questions about how she should use her time before school. The schedule at Artesian seems almost made for students like Taylor. She's aware that her skill level is behind the relative academic skills of students at her grade level, but she sees it as a fun challenge. She knows she will catch up, and each day she is eager to see how much more she learns. Taylor feels a strong sense of security at school because her teachers are consistent and work with her at the same time, every weekday for the entire school year.

At 7:30 AM the doors to Artesian Community School open, and Taylor is eager to enter the cafeteria so that she can sit with some of her friends for a healthy and delicious breakfast. Each day, the Principal and School Director greet every student before breakfast. Today she chooses Mrs. Anderson's line because she wants to show the Principal her newly-updated Growth Plan that shows how much she has improved in reading *and* in math—the subject she used to find almost impossible.

In the cafeteria there are 2 Academic Coaches waiting at different tables to collect homework and work with any students who want extra help in math or English. Taylor turns in her homework before getting her breakfast and meeting her friends. The work she turns in will be distributed to her subject area teachers and marked for completeness and professionalism.

Some laptops are available for personal learning/enrichment for students who are finished with breakfast. One of her friends quickly finishes breakfast to claim one of the laptops that he earned the privilege of using this week because of his excellent behavior. The rest of the friends talk about what they think will happen next to Jo in *Little Women*, the book they are reading for both Reading and Writing class.

Taylor has grown very close to the other members of her grade level team, the SEC. At Artesian, students travel in teams for their core courses—the SEC's teams are named University of Tennessee, University of Georgia, and Louisiana State University. The teams range in size from 25-34 students, but bigger teams have a co-teacher in all their core academic classes. Teachers at Artesian foster intellectually safe classroom spaces by encouraging students to take risks and using mistakes or failures as key learning opportunities. For this reason, Taylor has become very comfortable with the other members of her team, and she is more willing than ever before to participate fully in class.

At 7:53 AM, a bell rings indicating that it's time to clean up the area and get ready to go to her first class. Taylor stops by her locker to get her Reading and Writing notebook, is greeted by her teacher at the door of the classroom, and is seated in class two minutes before the next bell rings at 8:00. Her teacher has put a thought-provoking Do Now on the board, and Taylor knows she needs to find evidence from her book to back up the answer she writes down. Taylor gets practice

finding evidence from the text in almost all her classes. Her teachers are genuinely interested in hearing what her thoughts and opinions are, but they constantly push her and her teammates to back up what they are thinking with evidence.

Taylor is behind in reading (she started the year on a 2.9 grade reading level and is now on a 3.7 reading level), but her teachers don't give up on her and are constantly reminding her of how much she is improving. Although reading and writing are a challenge to Taylor, she loves her morning schedule at Artesian because she has P.E. in between Reading and Writing which is an important brain break for her. This is a very structured class that integrates plenty of exercise with units on personal health, nutrition, and wellness.

At 10:30 AM, Taylor returns to her locker to grab her Science binder and takes a quick bathroom break. One of Artesian's values is Responsibility, and a way for students to practice being completely responsible for their actions is during class transitions. Five minutes of transition time are built in between every class, which allows students to use the restroom up to nine times per day, go to their lockers, interact with other students, and most importantly, arrive to their next class on time.

Taylor smiles to herself as she prepares to go to science—her favorite subject! Sometimes Taylor jokes with her Science teacher, Mr. White, because he always seems to sneak in more reading and writing, but she works hard for him because she loves science, and Mr. White makes it very interesting.

After Science and before lunchtime, Taylor has PE—a good brain break for her after three intense, fast-paced classes—but only some of the students on her team are also in this class; UGA splits up as they head to tutoring, PE, or an elective class. During the day, all students will take all three classes; splitting up provides additional opportunities for students from different teams to interact with one another throughout the day.

Occasionally, teachers join the students for lunch, but most of the time, the adults at lunch are Academic Coaches and Character Coaches. The adults spread out at different tables to talk with and get to know the students. In her previous school, Taylor never saw a teacher having lunch with students. At Artesian, she's come to enjoy the types of conversations she and her friends have with the adults.

After lunch, it is 12:05 and time for Social Studies, which is taught by Taylor's writing teacher, Mrs. Lovell. The teachers at Artesian always keep Taylor interested. They actually make the students do most of the talking. In previous schools, Taylor's teachers talked the entire class period. At Artesian, teachers ask more questions, facilitate more discussions, and always emphasize that students demonstrate their learning.

There are commonalities Taylor notices between classrooms – whiteboards are configured the same way, each classroom has a word wall displaying academic vocabulary and the Root of the Week with example words, the classroom procedures are the same in each class, and the expectations for classroom behavior do not change between classes.

Taylor stops by her locker on the way to math, her last academic class of the day. This class is ten minutes longer than her other core subjects, but it doesn't seem like it. Taylor feels lucky because her class has a co-teacher traveling with them to each of their core classes during the day. Since she struggles in math, she usually gets one to two pull-outs with the co-teacher and other students struggling with similar concepts during Math. The co-teachers at Artesian provide more individualized attention, support, and enrichment in order to differentiate to students who are behind and those who are ahead. The additional teacher in the room reinforces her confidence that she will not only achieve her personal growth goals and the grade level standards, but will possibly exceed them.

After Math, Taylor gets another brain break—her elective class—before working with her tutor and her classmate, Kiera, to solidify foundational math skills that sometimes hold them back in class. The three meet five days each week to revisit and strengthen essential math concepts. Taylor likes that her tutor is called an Academic Coach because that is exactly his role! Each day he helps Taylor and Kiera practice and refine important foundational skills so that one day basic math will come as second-nature when the girls are doing higher-level problems.

As her elective this quarter, Taylor signed up for Music. She likes this class because she is exposed to many types of instruments and music. Her music teacher is taking the class on a field trip to the Canon Center next weekend to hear the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

Another aspect of the school that Taylor has grown to love is her Advisory. This is the last class of the day for Taylor, and it is led by one of her favorite teachers and is made up of a small group of 8 entirely female students—all representing classes from the SEC cohort. During this period Taylor and her Advisory mates talk about struggles they're facing, successes they've achieved, and work on team-building, communication, and critical thinking skills. Her teacher makes sharing so easy, and Taylor feels a high degree of trust with her peers in the class. This year, the sixth grade class is focusing on the essential question, "Who am I?" Her peers brought in items from their homes that explain heritage, family traditions, and family values. As the years move on, Taylor and her Advisory group will have deeper conversations about how they can impact the neighborhood surrounding the school.

During Advisory, Taylor also has time several days each week to self-reflect and monitor her own progress towards ambitious academic and character goals. Although she was not accustomed to using charts and data, she learned about Artesian's student Growth Plans during summer orientation and how to use them to track her mastery graphically per subject and course standard. Every student has different individual growth goals for each subject based on where they started at the beginning of the year. Taylor has already grown an equivalent of .9 grade levels in math—more than halfway to her personal goal for this year! She is excited because the two sixth-grade teams are having a contest to see which class can show the most cumulative growth before Winter Break, and the University of Georgia just moved into second place.

Before she knows it, the school day is over and it is 4:00 PM. When her family first told her about the extended school days, Taylor gasped. She could not imagine staying at school until 4:00. Her

sister in 8<sup>th</sup> grade leaves at 2:40 PM, but after four months being at Artesian, she could not imagine leaving that early! It seems that there is so much to do. Sometimes Taylor stays after school for extra tutoring help or to use the computer lab and do research online, but today she is going straight home because she has a lot of reading to do tonight.

Taylor has been surprised at the changes she's gone through, but most importantly, her parents have seen a total metamorphosis. Their daughter was once very shy and unwilling to participate in classes. Now, she is talking about school all of the time, and she takes it very seriously. Not only are Taylor's parents surprised at how hard their daughter is working, but they also feel well-informed about what's happening at the school—for the first time. They receive information about her progress at least weekly via telephone from her Advisor, and Taylor brings home her updated Growth Plan often; this week's was the third update they had received in four months.