

Standards for Mathematical Practice - Grade 6

The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe the skills that mathematics educators should seek to develop in their students. The descriptions of the mathematical practices in this document provide examples of how student performance will change and grow as they engage with and master new and more advanced mathematical ideas across the grade levels.

MP.1 Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.

In grade 6, students solve problems involving ratios and rates and discuss how they solved them. Students solve real world problems through the application of algebraic and geometric concepts. Students seek the meaning of a problem and look for efficient ways to represent and solve it. They may check their thinking by asking themselves, “What is the most efficient way to solve the problem?”, “Does this make sense?”, and “Can I solve the problem in a different way?”. Students can explain the relationships between equations, verbal descriptions, and tables and graphs. Mathematically proficient students check their answers to problems using a different method.

MP.2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

In grade 6, students represent a wide variety of real world contexts through the use of real numbers and variables in mathematical expressions, equations, and inequalities. Students contextualize to understand the meaning of the number or variable as related to the problem and decontextualize to manipulate symbolic representations by applying properties of operations or other meaningful moves. To reinforce students’ reasoning and understanding, teachers might ask, “How do you know?” or “What is the relationship of the quantities?”.

MP.3 Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

In grade 6, students construct arguments using verbal or written explanations accompanied by expressions, equations, inequalities, models, and graphs, tables, and other data displays (i.e. box plots, dot plots, histograms, etc.). They further refine their mathematical communication skills through mathematical discussions in which they critically evaluate their own thinking and the thinking of other students. They pose questions like “How did you get that?”, “Why is that true?” “Does that always work?” They explain their thinking to others and respond to others’ thinking.

MP.4 Model with mathematics.

In grade 6, students model problem situations symbolically, graphically, in tables, contextually and with drawings of quantities as needed. Students form expressions, equations, or inequalities from real world contexts and connect symbolic and graphical representations. Students begin to explore covariance and represent two quantities simultaneously. Students use number lines to compare numbers and represent inequalities. They use measures of center and variability and data displays (i.e. box plots and histograms) to draw inferences about and make comparisons between data sets. Students need many opportunities to connect and explain the connections between the different representations. They should be able to use all of these representations as appropriate and apply them to a problem context. Students should be encouraged to answer questions such as “What are some ways to represent the quantities?” or “What formula might apply in this situation?”

MP.5 Use appropriate tools strategically.

Students consider available tools (including estimation and technology) when solving a mathematical problem and decide when certain tools might be helpful. For instance, students in grade 6 may decide to represent figures on the coordinate plane to calculate area. Number lines are used to create dot plots, histograms, and box plots to visually compare the center and variability of the data. Visual fraction models can be used to represent situations involving division of fractions. Additionally, students might use physical objects or applets to construct nets and calculate the surface area of three-dimensional figures. Students should be encouraged to answer questions such as “What approach did you try first?” or “Why was it helpful to use?”

MP.6 Attend to precision.

In grade 6, students continue to refine their mathematical communication skills by using clear and precise language in their discussions with others and in their own reasoning. Students use appropriate terminology when referring to rates, ratios, geometric figures, data displays, and components of expressions, equations or inequalities. When using ratio reasoning in solving problems, students are careful about specifying units of measure and labeling axes to clarify the correspondence with quantities in a problem. Students also learn to express numerical answers with an appropriate degree of precision when working with rational numbers in a situational problem. Teachers might ask, “What mathematical language, definitions, or properties can you use to explain ___?”

MP.7 Look for and make use of structure.

Students routinely seek patterns or structures to model and solve problems. For instance, students recognize patterns that exist in ratio tables recognizing both the additive and multiplicative properties. Students apply properties to generate equivalent expressions (i.e. $6 + 2n = 2(3 + n)$ by distributive property) and solve equations (i.e. $2c + 3 = 15$, $2c = 12$ by subtraction property of equality; $c = 6$ by division property of equality). Students compose and decompose two- and three-dimensional figures to solve real world problems involving area and volume. Teachers might ask, “What do you notice when ___?” or “What parts of the problem might you eliminate, simplify, or ___?”

MP.8 Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

In grade 6, students use repeated reasoning to understand algorithms and make generalizations about patterns. During multiple opportunities to solve and model problems, they may notice that $\frac{a}{b} \div \frac{c}{d} = \frac{ad}{bc}$ and construct other examples and models that confirm their generalization. Students connect place value and their prior work with operations to understand algorithms to fluently divide multi-digit numbers and perform all operations with multi-digit decimals. Students informally begin to make connections between covariance, rates, and representations showing the relationships between quantities. Students should be encouraged to answer questions such as, “How would we prove that ___?” or “How is this situation like and different from other situations?”