



Frequently Asked Questions about Lab at McAuliffe

What is Lab?

“Lab” is a new course at McAuliffe in the 2015-16 school year, which replaces last year’s “X-Block.” It is designed to specifically target the area where each individual student most needs support or a push.

How are scholars assigned to Lab classes?

Students are assigned to Lab classes based on data and teacher recommendations. Each Lab class will last for half of the school year. Teachers will assess students on an ongoing basis and we will make adjustments to class assignments as needed.

How does Lab work for scholars who have Individualized Education Plans?

Lab classes are additional to the supports we provide to students in learning center, substantially separate classes, and English Language Learner classes; if your scholar receives one or more of those services, he or she will continue to participate in those courses at another time in the school day. For students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), some service delivery may be administered during Lab.

Will scholars receive grades during Lab?

Students will not be formally graded for lab; however, teachers will be assessing students and monitoring progress on an ongoing basis. Teachers will use ongoing assessment to determine any adjustments for future Lab assignments.

How is 6th Grade Lab different from 7th and 8th Grade Labs?

7th and 8th graders have been placed into mixed-grade classes, based on their needs, from the beginning of the year. 6th graders have launched the year with a course called “6th Grade 101” which has helped introduce students to the school and the skills of successful scholars. Teachers are finalizing 6th grade Lab assignments and plan for 6th Lab to start the week of October 13. Note: 6th Lab classes will be comprised of only 6th grade scholars.

What are the Lab Classes?

Extension Lab: Students who are already working at or above grade level in the areas targeted by Math, ELA, and Skills labs will be assigned to an Extension Lab. Extension Labs are academic

courses that are designed to continue to push students in an academic discipline. They build on the strengths and passions of our faculty as well as the academic needs of our strongest scholars. In the 7th and 8th Grades, Extension Labs include:

- *Shakespeare*: Students are reading, analyzing, and performing a Shakespeare play, based on best instructional practices developed by the Globe Theatre in London
- *Marine Biology*: Through high-level readings, film, and hands-on projects, students are delving into the science of the ocean.
- *Literature Circles*: Students are building skills in reading and facilitating text-based discussions, and are increasing the volume and range of texts that they read over the course of the year.
- *Fashion Design*: Using the principals of design, students are developing and producing an article of clothing for a particular discipline.
- *Self, the World, and Philosophical Implications*: Students are synthesizing current events, works of philosophy, and self-reflection to analyze and debate big ideas.

6th Grade Extension Lab topics will include Spanish, technology, and stories for performance.

Math Lab: Is designed for students who are at risk for below-grade learning outcomes in mathematics. Students who need extra support around basic computation and problem solving will receive robust intervention during Math Lab. These labs have a very small teacher to student ratio. Students will experience a blend of online curriculum called PLATO and teacher-led lessons. PLATO provides self-paced, personalized instruction that is developmentally and age appropriate.

ELA Lab: Students who need extra support in reading grade-level texts with comprehension will receive targeted instruction in ELA Lab. Like Math Lab, ELA Labs have a very small teacher to student ratio, and instruction will be focused on increasing students' abilities to read with basic and/or inferential comprehension with increasing independence.

Skills Lab: Skills Labs are designed to provide targeted areas outside of an academic subject based focus that many middle schoolers need for extra support include executive functioning, social skill building and learning how to work well with others. These labs are designed and overseen by Sarah Hanson, School Adjustment Counselor.

Most students identified for Skills Lab will receive once a week support in executive functioning. Executive Functioning incorporates the self-management tools necessary to work toward goal directed tasks. Specific areas of executive functioning taught during this lab course will include: organization of materials and thoughts, planning and prioritizing, sustaining attention while working, study methods, and managing emotions while working. Students who need support in

both Executive Functioning and math or ELA will have an executive functioning lab once a week and a math or ELA lab twice a week.

Some students have been identified as needing social skill teaching in a group setting where peers can learn and practice with each other. This Skills Lab will take place two times per week based on a Social Thinking foundation, a framework for social skill teaching developed by Michelle Garcia Winner, a well-known speech and language pathologist. Students will learn how to read clues in the social world around them, why and how to take on someone else's perspective, create desired impressions of themselves, the importance of using tools to regulate emotions and what the "hidden" social rules are of middle school that are not explicitly taught.

Other students have been identified as needing support in working well with others OR would benefit from developing skills to lead other students. Two times per week these students will be in a lab called "Peer Leadership," in which they will be playing cooperative games in a small group with pre-activity framing and debrief processing in order to help students use active listening, develop overall tolerance for other's opinions and ways of doing things as well as foster leadership skills. Students in this lab will either be in a once a week Executive Functioning Lab or a Leadership Skills Lab, based on their particular needs.

We are excited about our Lab program and the growth opportunities it offers our students! If you have any questions, please contact [Christina Morello](#), Math / Science Instructional Coach; [Nellie Zupancic](#), Humanities Instructional Coach; or [Sarah Hanson](#), School Adjustment Counselor.