One hundred or well more than half of the 167 incoming Newark Middle School sixth graders next month had the unique opportunity August 22nd to get a lot more acquainted with what will be their new school environment by attending a three-hour-long “Sixth Grade Camp.”

Developed by the sixth grade teachers this year as means of making students feel at ease in their new building before school opens September 5th, the three-hour camp preceded the school’s annual, hour-long “Locker Night” Aug. 22nd.

Camp activities began with a welcoming assembly in the auditorium where students played a game and then each was given one of four different colored cards indicating which of four groups of 25 they would participate with in four, 30-minute camp activities during the next two hours.

They included:
- A scavenger hunt search of the classrooms in the Neighborhood, the middle, sixth grade hallway where most of their classes are held, during which they met sixth grade teachers.
- Each student symbolically planting a bean in baggy containers in the Science Lab that they will watch grow during the next few months as they will grow in their Middle School experience.
- Making different colored magnetic schedule boards they hung inside their new lockers where each student also found a Newark Reds sports sling bag.
- Making sundaes with various kinds of toppings in the cafeteria as a “Get To Know You” activity.

Sixth Grade Camp Helps Ease New Middle School Students’ Transition
All of the sixth grade teachers wore tee shirts – donated by Crazy Dog T-Shirts of Rochester _ with Bitmoji “pictures” of themselves on them _ the same “pictures” that appeared outside their classrooms.

“The NMS staff wanted to begin to build a community with our new students and make them feel comfortable and excited about the transition to their new school,” Sixth Grade teacher Karen Taber explained. “In the past, we just had the “Locker Night” evening in which students could visit our school with their families and have a traditional orientation and “meet and greet” with the teachers. Our goal this year was to do something more for the incoming sixth graders to really help them feel a part of our Newark Middle School community from the very beginning. We decided that there was no better way to get to know our kids than to participate in some fun “camp” projects with us, and the idea of a sixth grade camp was born.

“Incoming sixth graders arrived at 3:00 and participated in a variety of activities in our sixth grade Neighborhood,” Taber continued. “A scavenger hunt guided by teachers helped students to explore their new school and learn about the adults who will be an important part of their lives for the next few years. A science project allowed students a first glimpse of the beautifully equipped labs we have at Newark Middle School. When students opened their new lockers for the first time, there was a nice surprise inside for each of them. Finally, our new sixth graders were treated to an ice cream sundae event that led to many more memories being made. Our camp was great fun for all!

“When the camp portion of the day was completed, students were escorted to the auditorium to meet their families,” she said.

Prior to that, parents had been listening to a half-hour presentation and overview of Middle School life by Principal Teresa Prinzi and Assistant Principals John Ginter and Laurie Palmisano.

“Students were very excited to show family members their new schedules and many felt comfortable already guiding their parents through the school on a tour,” Taber said. “Families were also treated to a hot dog barbeque in the cafeteria. It was a wonderful opportunity for our Newark Middle School community to gather together and prepare for a great year of learning!”
Sixth grade teacher Amanda Carpenter said she and the other teachers were thrilled with the Sixth Grade Camp turnout.

“It was such a great way to get acquainted with so many of our incoming sixth graders,” she said.

“Camp gave them more time before school opened to feel the Newark Middle school building is their new school. Smiles on their faces told the story and by night’s end the kids seemed to be building relationships with their teachers and each other. Many said they loved it and it really helped ease any jitters they may have had about coming to the Middle School.”

“The addition of the Sixth Grade Camp this year was such a great way to build relationships with students and create a positive experience for students and families,” Prinzi said. “We had so many excited students spending the afternoon with us! I think the teachers were just as excited about the success of this event as the students and families were. We are looking forward to a great year of teaching and learning!”

Prinzi received a lot of positive feedback from parents including these comments sent to her afterward.

“I just wanted to say thank you for tonight. I thought it was very well organized and informative!”

“Last night was a blast! We truly enjoyed our 6th grade orientation night with all of you. It was so great to get to meet all of my daughter’s new teachers and get to see their classrooms and we are so excited for this Middle School experience to begin! It was such a great event and I’m so pleased we were able to do this.”

Carpenter also noted eight new 7th and 8th graders also attended “Locker Night,” giving them a chance to get acquainted with their new school, tour the building, obtain their schedules, visit their lockers and participate in their hot dog barbeque with everyone else.