



Middletown Township Public Schools
Middle School English Language Arts Guidelines for Parents
2018-2019

MODEL OF INSTRUCTION

Student learning is based on a *balanced literacy model* of instruction that includes skill based lessons in reading, writing, word study and speaking & listening. Students are engaged in both direct and indirect instruction in whole group and small group settings. Reading & Writing Workshop along with classroom libraries will provide opportunities for shared and individual learning experiences and help students develop a deep appreciation for quality literature. Teachers scaffold instruction to align with the needs of individual students to support growth, independence and achievement in reading and writing. Units of Study, book clubs and quality literature, including nonfiction/informational text, are embedded throughout the curriculum with a core emphasis on making interdisciplinary connections and drawing evidence from text. Teachers and students work with a wide variety of materials including resources from Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project's Units of Study, and other materials that support the Reading and Writing Workshop.

READING

Reading instruction follows a workshop model and usually begins with a 10 minute mini-lesson that allows the teacher to model a specific targeted skill or strategy. Teachers will often use authentic literature to demonstrate the strategy that will be the focus of the lesson. Students will work with a balance of literature and informational text. Following the whole group instruction, students move into **small groups** for instruction tailored to meet their individual needs.

A central goal of language arts is to establish a reading habit in the lives of students. The importance of reading for all students is well-documented. In a meta-analysis of research investigating independent reading over the last forty years, researcher Stephen Krashen revealed that "no single literacy activity has a more positive effect on students' comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, spelling, writing ability, and overall academic achievement than free voluntary reading." Children who read the most at home surpass the educational success of their peers who do not read at home-*even those who are hard-working, capable students*. Clearly, reading is important, and the students who read the most possess the highest academic potential (Atwell, 2007).

In order to foster students' reading lives and build regular reading habits, students will have a choice in what they read independently. Books they choose will have a wide range of themes and topics that may reveal different perspectives on social issues, loss, identity, and coming of age. Teachers may not always know the details of every book your child chooses to read. Talk to your child about the books he/she chooses to read and investigate the contents. If you deem a particular book questionable, the student should choose another book more appropriate for his/her age and maturity level. Certain books may require a signed parental permission slip. An informative site for reviews and ratings is www.commonsemmedia.org.

READING ASSESSMENT

Middle schools will continue using the [*iReady Diagnostic Reading Assessment from Curriculum Associates*](#). This is an adaptive diagnostic assessment that provides a customized evaluation to assist teachers in identifying areas of instructional need and students' Lexile reading levels. This will measure student growth throughout the school year and allow teachers to differentiate instruction based on the data provided.

VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR

Vocabulary instruction is both explicit and implicit. Teachers provide students with terms and definitions that are appropriate to grade and reading level. Vocabulary is one of five core components of reading instruction that are essential to successfully teach students to read. In Middletown, vocabulary and grammar are integral components of the balanced literacy approach and instruction in these areas are prescriptive in nature and aligned to the [*New Jersey Student Learning Standards*](#).(NJSLS) Our middle school teachers develop their vocabulary instruction to meet students' needs through various means such as but not limited to the following:

- Grammar/vocabulary addressed during writing workshop based on student needs, either through mini lesson, small group or individual conferences
- Vocabulary can be addressed during the reading block through a multi-component approach

WRITING

Our district has fully implemented writing aligned to the *Teachers College Reading & Writing Project*. Our writing instruction allows teachers to guide students to become young authors. Teachers coach students and encourage them to take ownership of their writing. Spelling, grammar and punctuation instruction is embedded in each student's writing. Students focus on the authentic and ongoing *process* of writing instead of a *written product*. When students write, they are encouraged to build upon what they know and make connections to the world around them.

- Students will complete *On Demand Writing Prompts* that will guide instruction and allow teachers and students to develop personal writing goals. Additional *On Demand Prompts* will allow teachers to measure each student's growth as a writer and facilitate a focus on the *writer* rather than *the writing*.
- The Writing Workshop model of process writing instruction begins with a brief mini-lesson during which the teacher models an explicit writing skill often using mentor text to exemplify how real authors write. Following the mini-lesson students participate in guided practice of the skill modeled in the mini-lesson. Students work individually, with partners, or in small groups as the teacher moves about the room conferencing with students to refine their writing. Students move along a continuum as they revise, edit, share, publish and celebrate each piece of writing. In accordance with the Common Core State Standards students are required to support their writing with text-based evidence. They will need to draw on background/foundational knowledge and include analysis of informational text in their writing.

PARCC Assessment

Please note there will be only *one* testing window for PARCC this year.

Grades 6-8: April 8, 2019–May 28, 2019

(This window includes make-up dates, the exact dates within this window to be determined.)

WEBSITES

- For more information on the ELA COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE (CCSS)
<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>

- For more information on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)
<http://www.parcconline.org/>