



## Middletown Township Public Schools

### Elementary English Language Arts Guidelines for Parents

### 2016-2017

#### 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. Classroom libraries and literacy centers 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. Thematic novels, authentic literature and quality 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, *Journeys Common Core 2014* by Houghton, Mifflin, and Harcourt and other materials that support the Reading and Writing Workshop.

#### READING

- Reading instruction follows a workshop model and usually begins with a 10-15 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.

#### WORD STUDY/SPELLING

##### Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade

Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade word study will be implemented by using the Wilson *Foundations* program which is a phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling program for the general education classroom. *Foundations* is based upon the Wilson Reading System® principles and serves as a prevention program to help reduce reading and spelling failure.

Teachers incorporate a 30-minute daily Foundations lesson into their language arts classroom instruction. Wilson *Foundations* makes learning to read fun while laying the groundwork for **lifelong literacy**. Students will participate in a **systematic program** in critical **foundational skills**, emphasizing:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics/ word study
- High frequency word study
- Reading fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension strategies
- Handwriting
- Spelling

Please note, *Foundations* will also be used for the word study component of the literacy block in the Title I schools in third grade for whole class instruction and as a targeted intervention. Also please note that teachers may additionally use Words Their Way inventories/activities and Journeys Words Study in centers or for skill and strategy groups or to provide differentiated instruction to meet student needs.

##### WORD STUDY/SPELLING Grades 3-5

Teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to implement the Word Study approach to help students master the recognition, spelling, and meaning of words. Students will take spelling inventories, perform word sorts and word hunts, look for patterns and

discover word families. Students will record different categories of words in their individual word study notebooks. Using the word study component of Journeys 2014 literacy program or the *Words Their Way Companion Guides* as a resource, teachers work with students in whole groups, small groups or individually to help them become fluent readers and writers with growing vocabularies as they move through the following stages:

- *Emergent Stage*
- *Letter Name Alphabetic Stage*
- *Within-Word Pattern Stage*
- *Syllables and Affixes Stage*
- *Derivational Relational Stage*

### **Using Word Walls**

All of our elementary classrooms use prominently displayed word walls containing organized collections of words that align with instructional goals. Word walls provide students with quick and easy access to:

- Models of high frequency and sight words
- Grade appropriate patterns and relationships in words
- Grade appropriate domain-specific vocabulary
- Foundational phonics and spelling skills
- Support and reference as they read and write

Word walls grow, change and evolve throughout the year and are aligned with the instruction taking place in each classroom. Word walls are not limited to Language Arts Literacy and are also used to provide students with visual evidence of words they are using in context in Math, Science and Social Studies. Word walls are perennially works in progress that can interactively engage students when used as instructional tools.

### **WRITING**

Our district has fully implemented 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.

### **STANDARDIZED TESTING SCHEDULE for 2016-2017**

**Elementary Grades 3-5 PARCC Testing Window** – March 27, 2017 – May 19, 2017  
(including make-up dates). Exact dates within this window to be determined.

**NJASK – Science for Grade 4** – May 31, 2017 (make-up day: June 7, 2017)

### **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/>