



Middle School Literature & Language Arts 2009-2010

The Language Arts program is aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements set by the state of Washington. It blends the strands of reading, writing, grammar, speaking, listening, observing, investigating, analyzing, and evaluating, as well as using technology as a communication tool. Through the Language Arts program, students will develop the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills needed to be effective communicators in all areas of life: home, school, community, work, and beyond.

Literature: McDougal/Littell: *The Language of Literature*

The priority of the middle school level standards in reading is a continued focus on ensuring that all students are able to read with fluency and expression, and are prepared to read and comprehend a variety of complex texts in the content areas. At this level, students are aware of reading strategies and learn to apply them independently when encountering difficult texts or reading for a specific purpose. Readers at this stage also focus on strengthening their ability to make connections between what is current knowledge and what is new, and challenge texts by drawing on evidence from their own experience.

Students work on specific skills and reading strategies that help increase comprehension and critical thinking skills as we explore a variety of literary genres including: non-fiction, short stories, classics, poetry, drama, fantasy, science fiction, and historical fiction. Students will continue to engage in extensive independent reading as the primary means of increasing vocabulary and grammar knowledge, as well as their appreciation for great literature.

Students in the sixth grade are expected to read 25 books or “book equivalents” such as magazines or newspapers during the school year. Students in the seventh and eighth grade are expected to read 30 books or “book equivalents” during their seventh and eighth grade school year. Students will also be involved in literature circles, book report projects, classroom library and public library visits, note taking activities, and silent reading time as a way to extend their reading.

Language of Literature is a comprehensive literature program. Middle School classes focus on four key components within this series:

Reading: for different purposes, for information, critical reading, persuasion, and functional reading.

Vocabulary: context clues, word parts, word origins, synonyms and antonyms, connotative and denotative meaning, homonyms, homophones and words with multiple meanings, analogies, specialized vocabulary, decoding multisyllabic words, researching word origins.

Speaking and Listening: organization and delivery, narrative presentations, oral summaries of books and articles, research presentations, persuasive presentations, active listening for information, critical listening.

Literary Skills: text organizers, evaluating, making generalizations and drawing conclusions, summarizing, skimming, scanning and understanding graphics, taking notes, SQ3R (a technique for increasing reading comprehension), making inferences, predicting, distinguishing fact from opinion, recognizing cause and effect.

Students will also complete a variety of response activities and reflections that will address various comprehension skills and elements of literature: author’s purpose, point of view, main idea and details, sequencing, compare and contrast, drawing conclusions, as well as setting, character and plot. Good reading skills develop alongside comprehension and writing skills; thus writing is also an integral component to the reading program.

Additional novels and plays are incorporated throughout the middle school literature curriculum. Teachers may choose from additional resources including: *The View from Saturday*, *Hatchet*, *Dogsong*, *House on Mango Street*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Outsiders*, *True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Miracle Worker*, *Animal Farm*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Our Town*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Language Arts: Houghton-Mifflin: *English*

Houghton Mifflin *English* is a complete and thorough grammar and writing curriculum. The goal in Language Arts is to produce writers. Students will learn several modes of writing: descriptive, narrative, procedure, imaginative, expository, and persuasive. Students also learn a standard Book Review Book Report form. Their compositions will incorporate functional openings, well developed paragraphs structured around a topic sentence, abundant support, and graceful conclusions. Students also learn to enhance their report writing skills.

The text provides important grammatical skills including the parts of speech, sentence type and structure, word usage and mechanics. Emphasis is placed on the use and labeling of verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions. Students also focus on the mechanical correctness of writing — spelling, grammar usage, paragraphing, and use of capitals and punctuation.

Oral Language: Students participate in a variety of presentations and group discussions to enhance their speaking and listening skills. Their topics of study include: audience and sources, purposes, forms and communication skills.

Study Skills: Students also learn research and study skills, making outlines, taking notes, identifying the parts of a book, and using appropriate reference materials (dictionary, library, encyclopedias, and Internet). Students practice taking a variety of standardized test and completing timed writing assignments in preparation for the ISEE.

Writer's Workshop

Writing is taught in all grades using a writer's workshop format. This format allows students the opportunity to work on refining and applying skills taught during writing lessons. Lessons in the writing process include:

Prewriting: Students use prewriting activities to discover topics they know and care about. Students are encouraged to develop a sense of their purpose and what effect they have on their audience.

Rough Copy: When writing a rough draft, the focus is getting ideas down on paper. Ideas will be developed thoroughly before revisions take place.

Revising: Students will be encouraged to share their work for clarification and questions with their peers. They will take feedback and incorporate it into their work. Revision emphasizes the six traits of writing: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice and sentence fluency.

Editing: They will correct spelling errors and check for correct use of conventions, punctuation and grammar.

Final Copy/Publishing: Students will publish a final copy after all revisions have been made. Students will publish using word processing or their best handwriting.

Writing Skills: Writing is essential to a literate society and can be an act of discovery, of communication and of joy. This is a chance to directly instruct students in specific skills and traits that effective writers use. The lessons are based on the "6 Trait Writing" program and are constructed to allow the writer to discover, develop, clarify, and communicate thoughts and feelings. Students examine the craft of authors and practice these skills specifically. Students keep notebooks and journals in the areas of reading, religion, science, social studies and writing. These notebooks and journals are used for taking notes on specific lessons, observations, creating charts and diagrams, recording data, using data to draw conclusions, hypothesize, and generate thoughts and ideas. Students use their writing notebooks to brainstorm ideas, record reactions and beliefs, reflect on events, and express opinions.

Vocabulary and Spelling: Educators Publishing Service: *Wordly Wise 3000* and: *Vocabulary from Classical Roots*

Words are tools we use to think, express ideas and feelings, and to learn about the world. Because words are the very foundation of learning, improving students' vocabulary knowledge is a priority in our Language Arts program. Student word knowledge is strongly linked with academic accomplishment. Furthermore, organized study of vocabulary supports student success in the verbal sections of the high-stakes standardized tests, including the ISEE, ACT and SAT.

With the *Wordly Wise 3000* series, students participate in weekly vocabulary activities that help them learn and apply the set of weekly vocabulary words. Activities include defining and applying new words in a variety of settings, writing and studying vocabulary words, and taking a weekly vocabulary/spelling test.

Vocabulary from Classical Roots provides comprehensive, sequential vocabulary instruction that concentrates on Greek and Latin roots as the basis for understanding the meaning of unknown words. Learning Greek and Latin roots along with prefixes and suffixes enhances a student's ability to decode, spell and expand his or her vocabulary. The thematic lessons and exercises have students examine word relationships, determine correct usage of words in context, complete analogies, and use words in writing and discussion.