ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM MAP

GRADE 6

Updated December 2024

District 109 Overview of Programming

Department Vision

In the English-Language Arts Department, we believe in learning environments that foster students becoming **avid readers**, **prolific writers**, and **eloquent communicators**. Throughout the K-8 journey, students in District 109 will be challenged to:
- read, comprehend, analyze and critique text,
- clearly communicate ideas through crafting writing aligned with purpose and audience,
- and collaborate with others to learn new perspectives, articulate ideas, and challenge preconceived thinking.

As educators, we are committed to helping each student develop and strengthen these skills while cultivating a **love for literacy**, ensuring that our approach is inclusive, acknowledging and celebrating the diverse backgrounds and abilities within our school community.

Elementary (K-5)

District 109 uses a workshop model to nurture engagement and motivation by integrating choice, collaboration, and targeted scaffolding into literacy tasks. This practice provides students with opportunities to engage with grade level texts across a wide range of genres; balances teacher and student-led discussions; and promotes independence by providing time for strategic support and differentiated instruction. Teachers explicitly identify and model the skills and strategies they use as readers, writers, and communicators then support students in practicing and developing these skills independently. This instructional model allows teachers to develop students through naturally occurring and intentionally designed, responsive instruction that systematically addresses the strengths and needs of each learner. In Kindergarten writing is developed orally with teacher modeling and whole group & partner discussions.

Students also engage in explicit and systematic foundational skills instruction. This supports students in becoming active word solvers that are able to recognize words and patterns, take apart or put together words, know what words mean and to connect words to other words. Word study supports students through a developmental progression of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The progression includes phonological awareness, the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words; phonemic awareness the ability to identify and manipulate isolated sounds in spoken words; and phonics, the relationship between letters and sounds. As students develop, they move to study word parts and associate them with meaning, and in turn develop vocabulary. Language study develops students in understanding and utilizing appropriate grammar and conventions when reading, writing and speaking.

Key tenants of literacy development in the elementary grades:
- **Foundational Skills:** Phonemic Awareness, Phonological Awareness, Decoding, Spelling, Fluency, Concepts of Print (K-1), Handwriting (Manuscript K-1 and Cursive 2nd).
- **Vocabulary Development:** Generative Vocabulary (word parts and what they mean), Word Solving Strategies (ways to solve new or unknown words), Content Vocabulary (building knowledge about specific content) and Academic Vocabulary (the language of learning).
- **Communication:** Developing specific skills to listen effectively and speak clearly and strategically.

- **Knowledge Building:** Increasing knowledge around specific content, ideas, topics and concepts in order to understand new and more complex information in the future.
- **Comprehension Strategies:** Developing intentional and strategic ways to make meaning of complex texts (i.e. making inferences, identifying main idea, etc.).
- **Genre Knowledge:** Utilizing knowledge of unique genre characteristics to locate information and make meaning (i.e. structures, features, organizational patterns, etc.).
- **Writing Process:** Approaching writing tasks with intentional moves that are specific to where they are in the progression of developing written communication (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing).

Middle School (6-8)

In District 109 a focus is placed on disciplinary literacy. This practice highlights the specific reading, writing and communicating skills in a discipline (i.e. ELA, Science, Social Studies, etc.), with a focus on how experts in that discipline think and the skills and tools they use. In the discipline of ELA, students build knowledge around a topic, idea or content to critique and analyze literature. As part of the literature critique, students discuss and debate their thinking and interpretations, resulting in the formation of an opinion. They eventually form a final impression or opinion and argue their position through writing and debate.

Students begin by setting a purpose for reading and writing, which allows them to focus on specific skills and strategies that contribute to being successful thinkers and communicators. Additionally, all students are afforded the opportunity to independently interact with high quality, complex, grade level anchor texts in order to maintain equitable access to rigorous content and instruction. Students are supported through strategic scaffolding of texts, activities and lessons when working to build knowledge and study genre. These scaffolds ensure students are successful when working with anchor texts. After developing a deep understanding of anchor texts, students employ the writing process to articulate their thoughts and opinions to others.

Instructional flow of ELA Units:
- **Introduction of Writing Prompt:** Supporting students in establishing a purpose for reading and identifying the task they will focus on.
- **Reading for Comprehension (1):** A grade-level anchor text is provided for students to independently read and develop an initial understanding.
- **Building Knowledge:** Scaffolded instruction and varied texts allow students to develop schema connected to the content of the anchor text.
- **Reading for Comprehension (2):** Students revisit the anchor text with new knowledge and re-read to deepen understanding.
- **Genre Study:** Scaffolded instruction and varied texts allow students to develop an understanding of genre characteristics connected to the content of the anchor text.
- **Reading for Comprehension (3):** Students revisit the anchor text with understanding of genre and re-read to deepen understanding.
- **Synthesis:** Students engage in a seminar connected to the anchor text to further deepen understanding and discuss/debate the

understandings of others.
- **Writing Process:** Students take their new learning, develop an idea or opinion and utilize the writing process to communicate their thinking about the anchor text, based on the posed prompt introduced at the beginning of the unit.

Students also engage in novel studies and books clubs throughout the year. These opportunities allow students to apply what they have learned during previous instruction in an authentic way. This also affords students the opportunity to have a common experience around a specific text, topic or theme. Novels and book clubs expose students to texts and/or genres that they may not have read otherwise. Book clubs are also an opportunity to increase engagement, motivation and independence, as students are able to choose the texts they are reading and lead the conversations about those texts.

Workshop Model
The primary objective of workshop teaching is to engage students in authentic learning experiences and to develop independence. Through the use of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (quickly moving from teacher modeling, to shared and guided practice, to independent practice), this model of instruction fosters creativity and leads students to be responsive and take ownership of their own learning.

Key tenets of the Workshop model include:
- Exploration, Launch, Investigation, Dig-In, Connection: A discovery exploration or task that encourages conceptual thinking or a meaningful connection to the teaching point and/or instructional focus for the period.
- Mini-lessons: The teacher provides targeted instruction, through modeling and demonstration of a specific skill, strategy, or concept. The lesson utilizes approximately 25% of the instructional period.
- Independent Practice/Work Time: Intentional and structured periods of time in which students are practicing and developing skills in authentic and meaningful ways. This work is targeted, based on individual learner needs. Approximately 60% of an instructional period is devoted to independent practice/work time.
- Small Group Instruction: During independent practice/work time, teachers may pull small groups of students to reinforce and/or extend learning. Groupings are flexible, with student data leading to the development of learning targets.
- Conferring: Teachers talk with students, typically 1:1, to understand the work that a student is engaged in during independent practice/work time. The teacher then uses this information to generate a teaching point and/or goal for the student to support continued growth specific to the individual student's needs.
- Choice: Engagement is key to learning and retention. By supporting students in choosing their learning tools, topics, and methods of communicating understanding, they will be more connected to their learning; and in turn, more engaged.
- Routines/Structures: Teachers spend time explicitly naming, teaching and practicing behaviors that successful learners demonstrate. Through this intentional work, students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them as learners, and are able to develop independence and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Closure: Instructional periods end with assessment, reflection and/or discussion to solidify student learning and provide the teacher with an

opportunity to gather information to plan next steps. The closing also provides an opportunity for students to connect the day's learning/work to the broader content area and/or real world. The closing utilizes approximately 15% of the instructional period.

<u>Standards</u>

<u>English Language Arts Standards</u>

Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening & Language		
Semester 1 (ELA Pilot of _Lenses on Literature_, Carnegie Learning)		
Unit Overview	**Unit Focus Skills**	**Teaching Texts**
<u>Poetry of Place</u> ● Why do people have emotional connections to place? ● What makes a place special? **Driving Task Prompt:** Write a <u>collection of poems</u> in which you use sensory and figurative language to create a strong sense of place and convey the significance of specific places. Include at least one poem that uses a specific poetic form.	**<u>Reading:</u>** ● Analyze word choice ● Analyze theme **<u>Writing:</u>** ● Write narratives ● Use appropriate language, style, and tone ● Address audience and purpose **<u>Speaking & Listening:</u>** ● Figurative language ● Pronouns **<u>Language Skills:</u>** ● Figurative language ● Pronouns ● Nuance in word meaning	**<u>Anchor Texts:</u>** ● "The Sacred" by Stephen Dunn ● "Our House" by Sophie Cabot Black ● "Tawkwaymenahnah" by Denise Laijimodiere **<u>Building Knowledge Texts:</u>** ● "What Makes a Poem...a Poem?" by Melissa Kovacs ● "Michael Rosen's 9 Poetry Writing Tips for Kids" ● "Spoken Word from the Poet X" by Elizabeth Acevedo **<u>Genre Study Texts:</u>** ● "Ode on an Abandoned House" by Hayan Charara ● "The House on the Hill" by Edwin Arlington Robinson ● "The Tropics in New York" by Claude McKay ● "I Ask My Mother to Sing" by Li-Young Lee ● "A Blessing" by James Wright ● "Tree House" by Shel Silverstein ● "Enter this Deserted House" by Shel Silverstein

Self-Discovery ● Who are we? ● What makes us who we are? ● How do we learn about ourselves?	**Reading Skills:** ● Set reading goals ● Reflect on our reading abilities and reading in general ● Find central idea and theme ● Analyze and close read ● Annotate and take notes ● Analyze poetry, poetic language, type of poetic writing ● Analyze figurative language in specific and general examples	**Novel Study Text:** ● *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds
Grit ● How does grit lead to success? ● How does grit have a positive impact on those around you? **Driving Task Prompt:** After examining resources about grit and perseverance, and researching a person who has shown grit in life, write a TED-Talk inspired _presentation_ in which you explain how grit can help an individual succeed and potentially have a positive impact on a larger community. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts, videos, and resources.	**Reading:** ● Analyze medium and mode ● Analyze arguments **Writing:** ● Find and evaluate sources ● Gather information **Speaking and Listening:** ● Word knowledge ● Vocabulary meaning in context ● Presenting claims, ideas, and evidence in clear, multimedia formats **Language:** ● Develop and organize ideas in a presentation ● Interpret information presented in diverse media formats	**Anchor Texts:** ● "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance" TED Talk by Angela Lee Duckworth ● "Dear Basketball" by Kobe Bryant ● "Our Campaign to Ban Plastic Bags in Bali" by Melati and Isabel Wijsen **Building Knowledge Texts:** ● Student selected texts **Genre Study Texts:** ● *"Living Beyond Limits"* TED Talk by Amy Purdy ● "The Woman Who Invented Stuffed Animals" Video

Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening & Language
Semester 2 (ELA Pilot of *Lenses on Literature*, Carnegie Learning)

Unit Overview	Unit Focus Skills	Teaching Texts

Crafting Character ● How do relationships shape us? ● How do experiences make people change? ● How does learning a life lesson change people? **Driving Task Prompt:** Write a <u>short story</u> in which key events in the plot convey complex relationships between characters and lead to a change in the main character because of learning a lesson or theme. Use characterization techniques to make your characters dynamic and lifelike.	**Reading:** ● Analyze story elements ● Analyze perspective **Writing:** ● Develop ideas ● Organize ideas and events ● Provide closure **Speaking & Listening:** ● Advance discussion through questioning and response **Language Skills:** ● Syntax ● Punctuation	**Anchor Texts:** ● "Secret Samantha" by Tim Federle **Building Knowledge Texts:** ● "Short Story Structure: Shaping Successful Stories" from nownovel.com **Genre Study Texts:** ● "The Golden Touch" by Nathaniel Hawthorne ● "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara
Character Book Clubs	**Reading:** ● **Writing:** ● **Speaking & Listening:** ● **Language Skills:** ●	**Book Club Text Choices:** ● *Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt ● *A Night Divided* by Jennifer A. Nielsen ● *Counting by 7s* by Holly Goldberg Sloan ● *Someone Named Eva* Joan M. Wolf ● *Strange Birds* Celia C. Pérez ● *Wonder* by R.D. Palacio ● *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander ● *Holes* by Louis Sachar ● *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien ● *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card
Peers: Perks and	**Reading Skills:**	**Anchor Texts:**

Problems ● Why are relationships with peers so important? ● Why are they so challenging? **Driving Task Prompt:** After reading "The Party" and "The Outsize Influence of Your Middle-School Friends," write a <u>comparative analysis</u> in which you compare and contrast how the two texts explore the benefits and challenges of friendship. In your comparison, focus on how key ideas are introduced and developed in each text. Support your analysis with evidence from both texts.	● Analyze relationships among texts ● Analyze development of ideas **Writing Skills:** ● Organize ideas and events ● Introduce ideas and set context ● Evaluate and revise **Speaking & Listening:** ● Evaluate spoken arguments ● Engage in collegial discussions **Language Skills:** ● Vocabulary meaning in context ● Pronouns	● *The Party* by Pam Munoz Ryan ● *The Outside Influence of Your Middle-School Friends* by Lydia Denworth **Building Knowledge Texts:** ● *Social Interaction is Critical to Mental and Physical Health* by Jane E. Brody **Genre Study Texts:** ● *from Piecing Me Together* by Renee Watson ● *Having a Best Friend in Your Teenage Years Could Benefit You For Life* by Angus Chen
Choose Your Path ● What's more important, loyalty or justice? ● What's more important, being a realist or a dreamer? ● What's better, following the crowd or being an individual? ● What's better, having boundaries or no boundaries?	**Reading Skills:** ● Analyze the development of theme across a novel ● Close read a complex text ● Compare and contrast a text to real-life situations ● Select themes that match with associated texts and find ways to deepen complexity in analysis ● Use textual evidence to support multiple sides of an argument ● Connect multiple themes in analysis ● Compare and contrast film versions to written versions of a story	**Novel Study Text:** ● *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton

● Is it better to remain innocent and naive or tough and experienced? ● Is it better to be a gallant hero or dependable friend?		