



ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS

CURRICULUM MAP

GRADE 8

December 2024

Deerfield Public Schools District 109
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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.

Standards

[English Language Arts Standards](#)

Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening & Language		
Unit Overview	Unit Focus Skills	Teaching Texts
Semester 1 (ELA Pilot of <i>Lenses on Literature</i>, Carnegie Learning)		
<p><u>Finding Your Voice</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do people define themselves?• How do the parts of a person’s identity interact? <p>Driving Task Prompt: Write a <u>first-person narrative</u> in which you explore conflicting aspects of the narrator’s personality or identity. Use anecdotes and sensory or figurative language to convey ideas and experiences vividly. You may write as yourself or as a fictional narrator.</p>	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze structure• Analyze word choice <p><u>Writing Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write narratives• Introduce ideas and set context• Develop ideas <p><u>Speaking & Listening Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refer to reading or research in discussion• Engage in collegial discussion <p><u>Language Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verb mood and voice• Phrases and clauses• Adjectives and modifiers• Word knowledge	<p><u>Anchor Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Where I'm From</i> by Misa Sugiura <p><u>Building Knowledge Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• from <i>Identity: Definition, Types, & Examples</i> by Eser Yilmaz• <i>Self-Concept in Psychology: Definition, Development, Examples</i> by Saul McLeod• <i>Identity</i> by Julio Noboa Polanco• <i>I Know My Soul</i> by Claude McKay <p><u>Genre Study Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl</i> by Elizabeth Wong• <i>This Is Not Who We Are</i> by Naomi Shihab Nye• <i>Eleven</i> by Sandra Cisneros
<p><u>Perception vs Reality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can a country survive when the power is in	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analyze theme	<p><u>Novel Study Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Animal Farm</i> by George Orwell

<p>the hands of a few?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways does perception impact reality? • How do others' perceptions shape how we view ourselves? 		
<p><u>Choices & Consequences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do choices inform our identity? • What is the impact of our actions as a result of our choices? <p>Driving Task Prompt: Write a <u>literary analysis</u> focusing on two characters from the stories we've read throughout this unit. Analyze the circumstances leading to a pivotal choice they made, describe the choice itself, and examine how the consequences of that choice impacted the character. Support your analysis with evidence</p>	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze story elements • Analyze development of ideas <p><u>Writing Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for writing • Develop ideas • Use digital tools <p><u>Speaking & Listening Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and follow procedures for collaboration • Evaluate spoken arguments <p><u>Language Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style and tone • Verbals • Punctuation • Word knowledge 	<p><u>Anchor Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Marigolds</i> by Eugenia Collier <p><u>Building Knowledge Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Science of Regrettable Decisions</i> by Robert Pearl • <i>The Mysterious Workings of the Adolescent Brain</i> by Sarah-Jayne Blakemore <p><u>Genre Study Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Lady, or the Tiger?</i> by Frank Stockton • <i>A Sound of Thunder</i> by Ray Bradbury • <i>The Necklace</i> by Guy de Maupassant • <i>Button, Button</i> by Richard Matheson

<p>from the text.</p>		
<p><u>Morals and Empathy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can we use close reading to understand the plot of a story? ● How do we develop empathy through reading? ● Why is it important to build background knowledge before reading a text? ● How can we collect information from a novel to help us see characters change and grow? 	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explain how particular lines of dialogue or events in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or cause a certain decision to be made AND support an argument for how this is important to the overall story ● Identify the evidence that most strongly and thoroughly supports the explicit meanings ● Interpret two or more central ideas from the text ● Explain how the central ideas develop over the course of a text, including evaluating how the central idea is shaped by specific details ● Summarize the text without opinions or judgments 	<p><u>Novel Study Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee

Unit Overview	Unit Focus Skills	Teaching Texts
Semester 2 (ELA Pilot of <i>Lenses on Literature</i>, Carnegie Learning)		
<p><u>Using Your Voice for Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can individuals shape the world? • What can I do to shape the world? <p>Driving Task Prompt: After researching a social issue of your choice, craft a multimodal call to action in which you propose a concrete action to address the issue. Use rhetorical appeals to persuade your target audience.</p>	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze purpose • Analyze perspective • Analyze medium & mode <p><u>Writing Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research • Write arguments • Address audience and purpose • Find and evaluate sources • Adjust the plan or approach • Evaluate and revise <p><u>Speaking & Listening Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate multimedia components in a presentation <p><u>Language Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuance in word meaning • Syntax • Variations in English conventions and usage 	<p><u>Anchor Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Xiuhtezcatl Martinez Explains Why He’s Fighting Climate Change” by Xiuhtezcatl Martinez • “I Helped Expose the Lead Crisis in Flint. Here’s What Other Cities Should Do” by Mona Hanna-Attisha • “Naomi Wadler Speech at March for Our Lives” by Naomi Wadler <p><u>Building Knowledge Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-selected texts on chosen call to action topic <p><u>Genre Study Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Protected Sex” by Alice Duer Miller • “Do You Know?” by Alice Duer Miller • “Our Own Twelve Anti-Suffragist Reasons” by Alice Duer Miller • “To President Wilson” by Alice Duer Miller
<p><u>Overcoming Adversity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can readers understand the events of the past through literature? • Why does understanding the past help us in the future? 	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine and explain how the theme or central idea developed in the text • Explain in detail AND evaluate the interactions between people, events, and ideas in the text • Identify the evidence that most strongly and thoroughly supports the explicit meanings as well as major and subtle meanings in the text. 	<p><u>Novel Study Texts:</u> <i>Night</i> by Elie Wiesel <i>Warriors Don’t Cry</i> by Melba</p>

<p><u>Defining Villains</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes a villain? • Who decides who the villain is? <p>Driving Task Prompt: After reading multiple texts featuring villains, write and present a definition paper in which you define villain, drawing from implicit and explicit definitions explored throughout the texts in this unit. Refer to at least two specific cases to support your definition.</p>	<p><u>Reading Skill:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze perspective <p><u>Writing Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write informational or explanatory texts • Address audience and purpose • Develop ideas <p><u>Speaking & Listening Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and organize ideas in a presentation • Use voice and body to enhance presentation • Integrate multimedia components in a presentation <p><u>Language Skill:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verb mood and voice 	<p><u>Anchor Text:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lather and Nothing Else” by Hernando Téllez <p><u>Building Knowledge Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Perspective Drives Our Interpretation of Heroes and Villains in History” by Krystal D’Costa • “8 Villain Archetypes: How to Write Different Types of Villains” from MasterClass • “From Voldemort to Vader, Science Says We Prefer Fictional Villains Who Remind Us of Ourselves” from Association for Psychological Science • “The Tragedy of Erik Killmonger” by Adam Serwer • “Empathy for the Devil: Villains, Antiheroes, and Origin Stories” by Stina Leicht <p><u>Genre Study Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Biographical Lens” by Staff Writer • “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe • “The Possibility of Evil” by Shirley Jackson • “Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
<p><u>Villain Book Clubs</u></p>	<p><u>Reading Skills:</u> To Be Determined</p>	<p><u>Book Club Text Choices:</u> To Be Determined</p>

