

Overview of K-8 English Language Arts Curriculum

The K-8 English Language Arts Curriculum is a product of four years of work with a wonderful committee. Members worked summers, vacations, and after school hours to research and prepare it. The 6-8 sections have been piloted at the Junior High School for the past two years and were edited and revised several times. The K-5 sections were reviewed by all classroom teachers and reading interventionists for their initial input in the spring of 2014 and then again this March at a three- hour workshop.

The units are grounded in the Maine Learning Results and reflect the five areas of practice: Literature, Informational Text, Writing, Language, Speaking and Listening. Grades K-5 have an additional area, known as Foundational Skills, that includes many of the basic reading and writing skills necessary for proficiency. At all grade levels, the units are designed to be accessed several times over the school year. Areas of the Maine Learning Results are interwoven in the units. For example, in the third grade Building Reading Habits Unit, there are standards for Speaking and Listening, Language, and Foundational Skills. In the sixth grade Informational/Explanatory Unit, there are standards in Reading Informational Text, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

The units are designed as a three year journey: Kindergarten through grade two, grade three through grade five, and grade six through grade eight. There are similar overarching principals in each span with differing expectations and materials in each grade level, depending on student developmental level. Rigor increases with each grade as students build understanding and skills in each content area. The units are designed to build across the grade levels, revisiting skills and concepts to give students opportunities to increase understanding, improve on skills they have acquired, and progressively add additional reading and writing skills. The overall goal of the units is to create strong capable readers and writers.

Brunswick had adopted a Writing Curriculum K-12 in 2011. This was based on older Maine Learning Results and did not include Speaking and Listening, Literature, and Informational Text. The proposed K-8 ELA curriculum has writing integrated throughout the units and covers all the areas required by the Maine Learning Results. The older writing curriculum will no longer be used in grades K-8 with this new adoption.

K-5 Units include:

Building Reading Habits:

This unit is taught across the year to instill essential reading habits in our youngest readers to teach them behaviors strong readers engage in, to set the tone and the standards for reading instructions and to set students up for success as readers. Basic skills such as accuracy, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and purpose will be stressed at students' developmental level. Skills will vary from identifying the front and back covers of books in Kindergarten to demonstrating a wide variety of comprehension strategies and engaging in collaborative discussions and consulting reference materials in the upper grades. Helping students become passionate and proficient readers is the goal. This foundational unit sets students up to view themselves as readers and to internalize what it takes to be strong readers.

Literature

In these units, students will read extensively from developmentally appropriate stories, drama, poems, and myths from diverse cultures and different time periods. They will become familiar with text structures, such as plot, setting, main idea, theme and tone. Responding to reading by demonstrating knowledge of the text and showing evidence from the text in various ways will be stressed in all grades at the appropriate developmental level. Students will also participate in collaborative conversations about grade level topics with peers and adults. In the K-2 span students will focus on using literature to learn to read as well as understand how to think and talk about literature and progress toward using these reading skills to expand their knowledge of literature and learn from literature as appropriate in grades 3-5.

Informational Text

Students will read texts in social studies, science, history, and other areas, in order to build a foundation in these fields. Knowing how to read this type of writing and effectively read for meaning will give them the background to be successful readers within content areas as they reach the higher grades. They will investigate the differences between informational and narrative text. They will also learn the different text features that assist students in locating information. Self-selection of informational texts will allow students to explore areas of personal interest while acquiring and practicing essential skills. As students advance in their basic reading skills, more emphasis is placed on reading to learn and using reading skills to read more complicated informational texts. As in all the ELA units, student instruction and student materials will be diversified according to student ability and interest. The units are designed to allow teachers the flexibility to teach all students at their current reading level in order to effectively diversify reading and writing instruction.

Building Writing Habits

This unit will also be taught throughout the year to set the standards of writing workshop and the writing process. Skills learned in this unit will be applied throughout the year as students learn to write across genres. How people communicate through writing, grade level conventions of standard English grammar, learning how to edit and revise student work, are some of the topics covered. Starting as early as Kindergarten, students will be set up to view themselves as authors and be taught the skills and habits needed to generate and produce quality writing.

Writing Across Genres

Students in grades K-5 will be exposed to the elements of opinion, informational/explanatory and narrative writing; each grade level will build on what students have learned in previous grades to move them forward in their writing skills. In the earliest stages, students will use personal experiences to learn the basics of each genre of writing and will add to their repertoire of writing knowledge as they progress through grade levels. Purposeful writing includes, among other things, supporting opinions, demonstrating an understanding of content areas and conveying experiences and events. Included in all grades are the appropriate grade specific vocabulary and writing conventions. Students in kindergarten may write a class book about a shared experience to use as a model for personal narrative writing.

Students in fourth grade may conduct research and then write an informational piece with facts, definitions, concrete details while using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary. As students master the basics of various forms of writing, they will be required to delve into their subjects with more detail and understanding.

Appendices for Writing and Reading Habits

Each grade level has a specific appendix for grade appropriate skills in phonological awareness ,phonics and word recognition, vocabulary, knowledge of language and conventions, mechanics and word use. The appendices provide teachers will specific skills students need to master at each level to meet expectations as well as an overview of what students will learn across the grade levels. This allows for targeted intentional differentiation for these essential skills.

6-8 Units include:

Informational/ Explanatory: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language

Argumentative: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language

Narrative: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening and Language