

Grade 6 Literacy Block: Reading & Writing Lab 2009-2010 Syllabus

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Welcome to sixth grade **Literacy: Reading & Writing Lab**. Literacy can be defined as the ability to use language to read, write, listen, and speak. Language, in all of its many forms, is our foundation for purposeful communication and understanding. In this course, you will build upon what you already know about language and develop new strategies for effective reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Please take some time to read through this course syllabus and share it with a parent/guardian at home. I look forward to getting to know you throughout our school year together!

Expectations

You, the student, are essential to our classroom environment. Your special talents, the energy that you bring to class each day, and your contributions in class will have an impact on everyone around you. Here is what I expect from YOU each day:

<p><u>Prompt</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• arrive to class on time & get started with tasks right away• transition quickly & quietly from one activity to another	<p><u>Polite</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be respectful & courteous• be an active listener & only speak out at appropriate times• be aware of how you present yourself
<p><u>Prepared</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• bring required materials to class each day• collect & complete any missed work when absent	<p><u>Productive</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• produce quality work to the best of your ability• communicate – ask for help• participate in classroom discussions & activities• stay on-task

Supplies

Please bring the following to class each day:

- assignment planner
- 2 sharpened pencils and a pen for self-correcting
- pocket dictionary & thesaurus (you may store these in the classroom)
- *Writer's Notebook* (composition notebook to be stored in the classroom)
- one-subject spiral notebook for notes and practice exercises and a folder for handouts

Ultimately, you will gain confidence in your abilities and grow as both a reader and as an author throughout this school year!

Course Content

The focus of this course is to develop your child's individual strengths as a reader, writer, listener, and speaker. In tandem with your son/daughter's core subjects, Social Studies, Science, Math, and English, your sixth grader will have the opportunity to read, respond to text verbally and in writing, exchange ideas cooperatively in small groups, and present in class on a variety of subject matter in all content areas as a part of this interdisciplinary course. This class will integrate a reading/writing connection and content area learning to support student understanding and provide real-world contexts for writing. In addition, word study and vocabulary enrichment, test preparation, time management, and organizational strategies will be taught concurrently throughout the year.

Assessment

This course is unique in that your child will not receive traditional letter grades for the work that he/she produces in class. However, your child will receive formal assessments on his/her progress and development over the course of the year through a points-based system. Your son/daughter will be evaluated on an on-going basis in the following:

- reading fluency & dramatic oral reading
- reading comprehension
- process writing
- 6+1 trait writing
- spelling, grammar, usage, & mechanics
- active participation, discussion, & peer collaboration
- presentation/public speaking

Your child will be given specific criteria for completing short and long-term assignments and will be assessed based on these **rubric requirements**. Following an individual student-teacher conference on your child's work and after obtaining a parent signature from home, your child will need to turn in each of his/her assignments to a **Cumulative Reading/Writing Portfolio**.

Cumulative Reading/Writing Portfolio

Your child will maintain a Cumulative Reading/Writing Portfolio that will track his/her progress from September through June. This portfolio is a selection of your child's sixth grade work compiled over the course of the year and will be used to gather assessments of your son/daughter's performance and progress. Your child's awareness of the evolution of his/her thinking, reading, and writing will enable your child to capitalize on his/her strengths and set individual goals to address areas for improvement. You, the parent, are welcomed and encouraged to review your child's work during the school year.

Student-Teacher Conferences

I will be conferencing with your child regularly in order to give your son/daughter feedback on his/her work and provide some individualized instruction. This aspect of assessment proves to be the most valuable in that both positive feedback and suggestions for revision become routine throughout year. Through student-teacher conferences your child will gain the understanding that his/her success is a process and a progression and reflects time and effort. A student and teacher drafted conference sheet record will detail the feedback and revision and editing changes that the student will follow through with on his/her work. These conference records will be submitted along with drafts and a final composition. I have found that students greatly appreciate the one-on-one time with their teacher and become motivated to continue.

Learning Objectives

Reading Workshop

- Your child will learn new ways of thinking within (literal understanding), beyond (making predictions and connections, inferring and synthesizing), and about (analyzing and critiquing) different texts.
- Students will also study the features that characterize each particular genre of literature. For instance, your child will study the features that characterize narratives when reading stories, novels, and personal experience essays.
- The reading of informational texts and the understanding of their text structures, ways in which they are organized (chronological order, cause and effect, classification schemes), will also be an important component of this class.
- Along with reading across the disciplines, your son/daughter will work toward greater fluency, continue to expand his/her knowledge of literary terms and devices, and acquire new vocabulary that he/she will be able to use correctly in reading and writing.

Writing Workshop

- Writing workshop is designed to provide your son/daughter with opportunities to write frequently in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences. This year, your child will write extended compositions, short pieces on demand, and informal reflections both to communicate with others and to focus his/her own thinking.
- Through process writing, your child will learn to apply strategies for organizing a first draft (brainstorming, planning, mapping, and clustering), writing successive versions, revising, and editing. Graphic organizers and models of expected student writing outcomes will help to guide your child through the pre-writing and drafting stages.
- Your son/daughter will learn to revise his/her compositions by reorganizing sentences or paragraphs for clarity, adding or deleting information, and finding precise words. Daily modeling and mini-lessons will help with this step by providing direct and explicit instruction on the attributes of quality writing (6+1 Trait Writing).
- On-going instruction will review, reinforce, and extend what son/daughter has learned in his/her introductory grammar lessons in English class in order to help with understanding how to self-correct for grammar, spelling, and mechanical mistakes so that your child will begin to apply editing skills as he/she writes.
- Your child's *Writer's Notebook* is designated as a place for your child to reflect, explore, and clarify ideas in all content areas. It will also contain your child's practice with writing on demand ("Quick Writes") wherein he/she will be required to write quickly, clearly, and succinctly typically in response to a question with the goal of producing a concise and comprehensible first draft.
- Your sixth grader will also engage in research writing using multiple sources and learn criteria for evaluating the quality of on-line information as well as standards for ethical use of the resources he/she finds.

*Course objectives and materials are aligned with the four strands of Literature, Language, Composition, and Media as outlined in the Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Frameworks.