DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Council of the Great City Schools

parent ROADMAP

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN HIGH SCHOOL

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

America's schools are working to provide higher quality instruction than ever before.

The way we taught students in the past simply does not prepare them for the higher demands of college and careers today and in the future. Your school and schools throughout the country are working to improve teaching and learning to ensure that all students will graduate high school with the skills they need to be successful.

In English language arts and literacy, this means three major changes. Students will continue reading and writing. But in addition to stories and literature, they will read more texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas including science and social studies. They will read more challenging texts and be asked more questions that will require them to refer back to what they have read. There will also be an increased emphasis on building a strong vocabulary so that students can read and understand challenging material.

What your child will be learning in high school English language arts and literacy

In high school, students will closely and critically read complex works of literature and informational texts. In writing and through class discussions, students will interpret what they read and present analysis based on appropriate examples and evidence from the text. They will assess the strength of an author's or speaker's points and assumptions based on evidence from the text. Additionally, students will expand their literary and cultural knowledge by reading great classic and contemporary works representative of various time periods, cultures, and worldviews. High school students will develop the skill, fluency, and concentration to produce high-quality writing, as well as the capacity to edit and improve their writing over multiple drafts. Here's a brief snapshot of some of the work students will be doing in these areas:

- Reading and analyzing foundational works of American and world literature and examining how two or more texts from the same time period treat similar themes or topics
- Citing strong evidence from a text to analyze what it says explicitly as well as what it infers, including determining when a text leaves a point unclear or unproven
- Identifying and evaluating the reasoning used in historical documents, including the application of constitutional or legal principles
- Supporting arguments in an analysis of challenging topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence
- Conducting short- and long-term research projects to answer a question or solve a problem
- Participating effectively in group discussions, expressing ideas clearly and persuasively and building on the ideas of others
- Demonstrating understanding of complex or figurative language (such as hyperbole), and distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is actually meant
- Understanding the role that figurative language plays in a text
- Presenting information using multiple media formats (such as graphics or audio/visual presentations) to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence

A hyperbole is an obvious exaggeration, such as "I waited for an eternity."

Here are just a few examples of how students will develop important literacy skills across grade levels as they read increasingly challenging works of literature.

READING LITERATURE

Grade Eight Reading	Grades Nine and Ten Reading	Grades Eleven and Twelve Reading
• Students determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot. • Students analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader create such effects as suspense or humor.	• Students determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details. • Students analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States.	• Students determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account. • Students analyze a point of view by distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant.

Sample Texts

In grades nine and ten, sample literary texts might include novels such as *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck or poems such as "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe. In grades eleven and twelve, sample literary texts might include novels such as *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald or *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, or poems such as "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats.

As they progress through grade levels, students will be asked more questions that require them to cite details or information from the texts they read. This will enable them to become observant and analytical readers.

Here are just a few examples of how students will develop important literacy skills across grade levels as they read increasingly challenging informational texts.

READING FOR INFORMATION

Grade Eight Reading	Grades Nine and Ten Reading	Grades Eleven and Twelve Reading
• Students cite evidence from the text that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. • Students evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (such as print or digital text, video, or multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.	• Students cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. • Students analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (such as a person's life story recounted in print, video, and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.	• Students cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. • Students integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (such as visually or through numbers) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Sample Texts

In grades nine and ten, sample informational texts might include historical documents such as "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr. or "Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln. In grades eleven and twelve, sample informational texts might include historical documents such as *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine, or social commentary such as "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell.

Some reading guidelines may seem similar from year to year, but students will apply a greater depth of knowledge and growing sophistication in their analysis of increasingly challenging texts.

Writing tasks in high school may include literary analysis, research papers, creative writing, and essays. Here are just a few examples of how students will develop important writing skills across grade levels.

Grade Eight Writing

- Students introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow, and develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information.
- Students provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
- Students organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.
- Students use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary to inform the reader about or explain the topic.

Grades Nine and Ten Writing

- Students introduce a topic and develop it with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficent facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- Students provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (such as articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
- Students organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions.
- Students use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary appropriate for the complexity of the topic.

Grades Eleven and Twelve Writing

- Students introduce a topic and develop it thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- Students provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (such as articulating implications or the significance of the topic).
- Students organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on what came before to create a coherent narrative.
- Students use appropriate and varied transitions and sentence structure to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- Students use precise language, subject-specific vocabulary, and writing techniques (such as the use of an analogy to illustrate a point) appropriate for the complexity of the topic.

Some writing guidelines may seem similar from year to year. However, with practice at each grade level, students continue to learn and apply the rules of standard written English and to strengthen and expand their vocabulary, use of language, and sophistication in the development and organization of ideas.

Helping your child learn outside of school

1. Increase time for conversation at home. Discuss classroom assignments, activities, and homework. Ask your child how he or she is doing in class and how you can help.
2. Ask your child about his or her academic goals and career interests. Assist in gathering various sources of information on college and career opportunities.
3. Begin to explore colleges and other postsecondary options that are of interest to your child.

Partnering with your child's teacher

Don't be afraid to reach out to your child's teacher—you are still an important part of your child's education. Ask to see samples of your child's work and discuss his or her progress with the teacher using questions like:

- Is my child becoming an effective writer?
- Is my child becoming more skilled at reading and understanding challenging material?
- What extra support can I provide at home to reinforce what you are teaching in class?
- How can I ensure that my child is developing good study habits for high school and beyond?

Additional Resources

For more information on the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy, go to http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/key-points-in-english-language-arts or http://www.commoncoreworks.org.