



Washington Township School District

Course Title:		English Language Arts				
Grade Level(s):		8				
Duration:	<i>Full Year:</i>	X	<i>Semester:</i>		<i>Marking Period:</i>	
Course Description:	This course is designed for the eighth grade middle school student. It offers an integrated and active approach to reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Students will learn 21st Century skills essential for success in college, career, and life. These include critical and creative thinking, clear reasoning, research skills, collaboration, communication, and information media, and technology literacy. This course offers a range of fiction and nonfiction texts that differ in complexity for the advancement of all learners. Activities include connecting reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to produce successful learning of skills and content.					
Grading Procedures:	Washington Township Schools District Grading Guidelines					
Primary Resources:	New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Grades 8 ELA CommonLit 360 Fiction and Non-fiction Core and Book Club Texts Self-selected Independent Reading Material Newsela Curriculum Addendum (Unit Modifications and Interdisciplinary Connections)					

Washington Township Principles for Effective Teaching and Learning

- Implementing a standards-based curriculum
- Facilitating a learner-centered environment
- Using academic target language and providing comprehensible instruction
- Adapting and using age-appropriate authentic materials
- Providing performance-based assessment experiences
- Infusing 21st century skills for College and Career Readiness in a global society

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Under the Direction of: Melissa Barnett, Department Supervisor

Written: Summer 2024
BOE Approved Date: _____

The mission of the Washington Township Public Schools is to provide a safe educational environment for all students to attain the skills and knowledge specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards at all grade levels so as to ensure their full participation in our global society as responsible, self-directed, and civic-minded citizens.



Grade 8 ELA - Unit 1

Unit 1

Unit Focus-Independent Choice Reading/Short Narrative Writing

Unit Duration: Pacing Plan Semester 1 (6 weeks)

Unit Description:

Through independent reading, students will be able to determine a theme or central idea of a text, analyze its development over the course of the text, and use text support to evaluate characterization, theme, point of view, and plot development. Students will be able to analyze how specific texts and/or excerpts relate to each other while citing textual evidence that supports the analysis of a text including carefully selected evidence and clear methods of elaboration to support a claim. Through independent reading and conferencing, students will build reading stamina, practice grade level skills and strategies, and develop interest and enthusiasm for reading.

While students will not be expected to produce full published pieces. Students will use these skills to produce short, clear and coherent pieces of writing that demonstrate both narrative and literary analysis techniques. These writing pieces will require students to use effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. With guidance and feedback from both teachers and peers, students will develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, re-writing, or trying a new approach.

Vocabulary and grammar activities will be infused to practice and reinforce skills and strategies. Learners will also employ active reading strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words through the practiced use of context clues, structural analysis, and root word knowledge.

Primary Resources

Anchor Curriculum Tools

*Student self-selected text for independent reading

*CommonLit Unit 1: The Art of Suspense

Standard(s): New Jersey Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJLSA).

Language Standards

L.SS.8.1A verb function

L.KL.8.2

L.VL.8.3

L.VI.8.4

RL Standards

RL.CR.8.1

RL.IT.8.3

RL.PP.8.5

RI Standards

RI.CI.8.2

RI.IT.8.4

W Standards

W.NW.8.3

W.WP.8.4

W.RW.8.7

S&L Standards

SP.PE.8.1



Essential Questions

How do readers find books of interest?
What strategies help readers manage distractions in order to read for extended time?
What “fix-it” strategies help readers when they get lost or confused?
What can the book I’m reading teach me about writing?
What process do writers use to generate ideas?
How do writers choose words and use voice to tell a story?
How do writers determine revisions in their pieces?
How can readers and writers best utilize a conference with the teacher to increase strategies for approaching difficult texts?
What is the value in sharing writing with others, listening to, and responding to feedback?
How do authors create suspense, and why are we drawn to it?

Assessment Evidence

“Must Do”

- *iReady Diagnostic Assessment
- *Culminating Independent Reading Project
- *Common Lit Unit 1 Skills Assessment: “The Patron”
- *Narrative Writing Sample

“Should Do”

- *Independent Reading Conferences
- *Notebook Writing Conferences
- *CommonLit Independent Practice Multiple Choice Questions
- *CommonLit Independent Practice Writing Prompt
- *Vocabulary Assessment

“Can Do”

- *Narrative Extension of CommonLit Text

Grade 8 ELA - UNIT 2

Unit Focus: Core Text Study and Analysis

Mode of Writing: Narrative and Multi-Narrative Writing

Unit Duration: Pacing Plan Semester 1 (7 weeks)

Unit Description:

In this unit, students will delve into "Dry," a dystopian novel by Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman. The story explores the consequences of a severe water crisis in California, following the lives of several teenagers as they struggle to survive. Students will analyze key literary elements such as theme, character development, and plot structure, and explore the use of multiple perspectives in storytelling. Additionally, students will examine the ethical and moral decisions characters face in crisis situations and discuss the social, political, and environmental issues presented in the novel. The use of carefully selected textual evidence to analyze how specific texts and/or excerpts relate to each other is a key skill developed throughout the unit.

Students will engage in daily writing craft studies and produce a narrative piece that demonstrates both narrative and literary analysis techniques. This will require students to use effective writing moves, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. With guidance and feedback from both teachers and peers, students will develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, re-writing, or trying a new approach.

Vocabulary and grammar activities will occur to practice and reinforce skills and strategies. Learners will also employ active reading strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words through the practiced use of context clues, structural analysis, and root word knowledge.



Primary Resources

Anchor Curriculum Tools

**Dry* by Neil Shusterman

*CommonLit 360

iReady

Standard(s): New Jersey Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLSA).

Language Standards

L.SS.8.1B, G verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives), active/passive voice, spelling conventions

L.KL.8.2

L.VL.8.3

L.VI.8.4

RL Standards

RL.CR.8.1

RL.CI.8.2

RL.IT.8.3

RL.PP.8.5

RI Standards

RI.CR.8.1

RI.CI.8.2

RI.MF.8.6

W Standards

W.NW.8.3

W.WP.8.4

W.RW.8.7

*W.IW.8.2 - Notebook writing

S&L Standards

SL.PE.8.1

SL.II.8.2

Essential Questions

Why do author's craft a story from different perspectives through alternating narrator's?

How does reading about a threat to survival in *Dry*, by Neal Shusterman, help us understand the way people respond to chaos, conflict, and crisis?

How do skillful readers and writers use characterization, setting, plot, conflict, theme, and point of view to develop an understanding of fiction and author's craft?

How do skillful readers and writers utilize their knowledge of text genres and text structures to enhance their analysis of theme?

How do authors develop and contrast the points of view of different characters in a core text?

How do skilled writers utilize text evidence to support their thinking and ideas?

How can skilled writers use effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences to write narratives about real or imagined experiences?

How do effective writers take laps through their writing to make revisions?

What are the benefits of peer feedback and ways to utilize it to improve our writing?

How can readers and writers utilize correct grammar and a wide range of vocabulary to ensure clarity when writing and speaking?

Assessment Evidence

"Must Do"

*Multi-narrated short story OR Express/Reflect Writing Piece from Write Like This

* *Dry* Final Assessment

*iReady Weekly Practice

*Grammar Assessment

"Should Do"



- *Independent Reading Conferences
- *Notebook Writing Conferences
- *Skill-based multiple choice questions using excerpts from Dry
- *Vocabulary and grammar assessment

“Can Do”

- *Published draft from Writer’s Notebook

Grade 8 ELA - UNIT 3

Unit Focus: Thematic Book Clubs

Mode of Writing: Literary Analysis

Unit Duration: Pacing Plan Semester 1 (6 weeks)

Unit Description:

Students will engage in thematic book clubs to further develop critical literacy skills. Through independent reading, analysis of text, and collaborative speaking and listening activities, students will expand their understanding of fiction by identifying literary elements, including theme. Students will be expected to maintain reading stamina and prepare for scheduled book club meetings in order to participate in discussion and demonstrate development of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills.

Vocabulary and grammar activities will occur to practice and reinforce skills and strategies. Learners will also employ active reading strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words through the practiced use of context clues, structural analysis, and root word knowledge.

Primary Resources

Anchor Curriculum Tools

Thematic Book Club Texts (*Survival*)

*CommonLit Unit 2: “Conveying Courage”

*iReady

Standard(s): New Jersey Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLA).

Language Standards

L.SS.8.1C, D, G verbs (indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive mood), spelling conventions

L.KL.8.2

L.VL.8.3

L.VI.8.4

RL Standards

RL.TS.8.4

RL.PP.8.5

RL.CT.8.8

W Standards

W.IW.8.2

W.WP.8.4

W.RW.8.7

S&L Standards

SL.PE.8.1

SL.AS.8.6



Essential Questions

How do the experiences of characters in a variety of texts demonstrate the theme of survival?

What does courage look like to you?

What can the book I'm reading now teach me about writing?

How can thematic book clubs enhance our understanding and enjoyment of a novel?

How can we effectively prepare for and contribute to our book club discussions by bringing in evidence from our reading and research to support our ideas and reflect on the discussion topics?

How can we follow discussion rules, ask thoughtful questions, and respond to others' comments to keep our book club discussions on track and improve our understanding of the book?

How can skilled readers assess how figurative language contributes to character development and theme?

How can skilled writers write an effective literary analysis essay that develops a topic using relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples?

How can skilled writers write a literary analysis that incorporates transitions and sentence variety?

How can we write routinely over extended time frames?

How can skilled readers determine and clarify the meaning of unknown words?

Assessment Evidence

"Must Do"

*LCA #1

*CommonLit Literary Analysis task

*Culminating Book Club Project related to theme

*CommonLit Unit 2 Skills Assessment 1: "Address Dedicating Rosa Parks Statue" OR Unit Skills Assessment 2: "Defeat"

*iReady Weekly Practice

"Should Do"

*Independent Reading Conferences

*Notebook Writing Conferences

*CommonLit Independent Practice Multiple Choice Questions

*Vocabulary and grammar assessment

"Can Do"

*Assessment of book club discussion skills

*Published draft from Writer's Notebook

Grade 8 ELA - UNIT 4

Unit Focus: Non-Fiction Core Text Study

Mode of Writing: Informative/Explanatory Writing

Unit Duration: Pacing Plan Semester 1 (5 weeks)

Unit Description:

In this unit, students will explore "The Finest Hours," a gripping true story of the U.S. Coast Guard's most daring sea rescue, written by Michael J. Tougias and Casey Sherman. The unit will focus on themes of bravery, teamwork, and the human spirit's resilience in the face of adversity. Through reading, discussions, and various activities, students will deepen their understanding of narrative nonfiction, analyze literary elements, and connect historical events to broader themes. Reading informational text is a critical literacy skill that will be developed throughout the course of this unit.

Primary Resources:

Anchor Curriculum Tools

**The Finest Hours* by Michael J. Tougias & Casey Sherman

*CommonLit 360

*iReady



Standard(s): New Jersey Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLA).

Language Standards

L.SS.8.1E, F, G punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash), spelling conventions

L.KL.8.2

L.VL.8.3

L.VI.8.4

RI Standards

RI.CR.8.1

RI.CI.8.2

RI.IT.8.3

RI.TS.8.4

W Standards

W.IW.8.2

W.WP.8.4

W.RW.8.7

S&L Standards

SL.PE.8.1

SL.ES.8.3

SL.UM.8.5

Essential Questions:

How does reading about natural catastrophes evoke empathy for individuals who go through a tragic event?

How do authors integrate information in different media formats to locate and integrate information?

How can skilled writers explain how supporting details develop a central idea?

How can we use teacher and peer feedback to develop and strengthen writing?

How can we write routinely over extended time frames?

How can skilled readers determine and clarify the meaning of unknown words?

How can readers and writers utilize correct grammar and a wide range of vocabulary to ensure clarity when writing and speaking?

Assessment Evidence

“Must Do”

*Infographic/Multimedia presentation

*iReady Weekly Practice

“Should Do”

*Independent Reading Conferences

*Notebook Writing Conferences

*Skill-based multiple choice questions using passages from The Finest Hours

*Vocabulary and grammar assessments

“Can Do”

*Independent Reading Project

*Published draft from Writer’s Notebook



Grade 8 ELA - UNIT 5

Unit Focus: The Art of Argument

Mode of Writing: Argumentative

Unit Duration: Pacing Plan Semester 2 (7 weeks)

Unit Description:

Students will strengthen their ability to analyze non-fiction texts. Students will carefully analyze texts that explore current and high-interest topics. Students while developing a deep understanding of the essential elements included in a strong argument (i.e. claim, the use of supportive evidence, reasoning techniques, and counterclaim establishment). After developing a strong foundation in the characteristics of argumentative writing, students will demonstrate their mastery of standards by producing a short, argument writing piece.

Primary Resources

Anchor Curriculum Tools

*CommonLit Unit 6: The Debate Over School Start Time

*iReady

Standard(s): New Jersey Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLSA).

Language Standards

L.SS.8.1E, F, G punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash), spelling conventions

L.KL.8.2

L.VL.8.3

L.VI.8.4

RI Standards

RI.TS.8.4

RI.PP.8.5

RI.AA.8.7

RI.CT.8.8

W Standards

W.AW.8.1

W.WP.8.4

W.SE.8.6

W.RW.8.7

S&L Standards

SL.PE.8.1

SL.II.8.2

SL.PI.8.4

Essential Questions:

What is the ideal school start time?

How do facts, examples, and pieces of evidence in informational text show how people, events, and ideas are connected or differ to help us understand the main message?

How do skilled readers annotate text that reveals important details related to a central idea?

How can skilled readers identify the author's purpose, perspective, or potential bias in a text and explain that impact?

How can skilled readers synthesize evidence in order to answer a research question?

How can a variety of data help to effectively develop an argument that is thoroughly supported?



Assessment Evidence

“Must Do”

- *LCA #2
- *iReady Progress Monitoring
- *CommonLit: Unit 6 Skills Assessment 1 and/or 2
- *CommonLit Research-based Argumentative Essay
- *Grammar/Vocabulary Assessments
- *iReady Weekly Practice

“Should Do”

- *Independent Reading Conferences
- *Notebook Writing Conferences
- *CommonLit Independent Practice Multiple Choice Questions

“Can Do”

- *Debate presentations
- *Independent Reading Project
- *Published draft from Writer’s Notebook

Grade 8 ELA - UNIT 6

Unit Focus: Book Clubs/Independent Reading

Mode of Writing: Multi-Genre

Unit Duration: Pacing Plan Semester 1 (4 weeks)

Unit Description:

This unit focuses on fostering a love for reading through book clubs and independent reading. Students will engage in collaborative and individual reading experiences, enhancing their comprehension, critical thinking, and discussion skills. By participating in book clubs, students will learn to articulate their thoughts, listen to diverse perspectives, and build a sense of community around reading. Independent reading will allow students to explore their interests and develop a habit of lifelong reading.

The unit will conclude with culminating assessments for students to demonstrate growth and proficiency of literacy skills.

Primary Resources

Anchor Curriculum Tools
Book Club Texts
Independent Reading Books
*iReady

Standard(s): New Jersey Learning Standards for English Language Arts (NJSLA).

Language Standards

L.SS.8.1A-G
L.KL.8.2
L.VL.8.3
L.VI.8.4

RL Standards

RL.CR.8.1
RL.CI.8.2
RL.IT.8.3



RL.MF.8.6

RI Standards

RL.CR.6.1

RL.CI.6.2

RL.IT.6.3

RL.TS.6.4

RL.PP.6.5

RL.MF 6.6

RL.CT.6.8

W Standards

W.WR.8.5

W.SE.8.6

*Multi-Genre Writing

Additional Standards TBD

S&L Standards

SL.PE.8.1

SL.AS.8.6

Essential Questions

How can we use the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills we've developed this year to engage in meaningful book clubs?

How can we apply/spotlight our excellent writing skills that demonstrate a strong voice and conveys an important message, story, or analysis?

How can we apply/spotlight our reading, writing, critical thinking, and speaking & listening skills through creation of a Genius Hour project?

*This unit will be teacher choice (open-ended, based on student feedback, teacher noticings/student needs/preferences)

*Note: The unit will conclude with a culminating PBL/Genius Hour/Multi Genre type mode of assessment

Assessment Evidence

"Must Do"

*Book Club Discussion/Participation Assessment

*Culminating project (teacher choice)

*iReady Weekly Practice

"Should Do"

*Book Club/Independent Reading Conferences

*Notebook Writing Conferences

*CommonLit Independent Practice Multiple Choice Questions

*Vocabulary assessments

"Can Do"

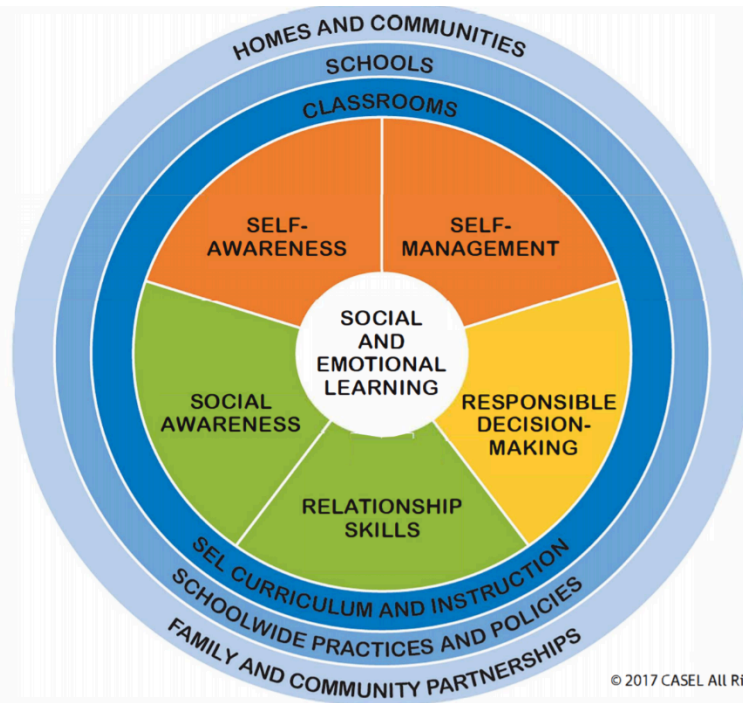
*Published draft from Writer's Notebook

*End of Year Reflection

Integration of SEL Competencies Across All Units of Study

CASEL's Framework:

<https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>



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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPETENCIES

SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."

- ➔ IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS
- ➔ ACCURATE SELF-PERCEPTION
- ➔ RECOGNIZING STRENGTHS
- ➔ SELF-CONFIDENCE
- ➔ SELF-EFFICACY

SOCIAL AWARENESS

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- ➔ PERSPECTIVE-TAKING
- ➔ EMPATHY
- ➔ APPRECIATING DIVERSITY
- ➔ RESPECT FOR OTHERS

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

- ➔ IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS
- ➔ ANALYZING SITUATIONS
- ➔ SOLVING PROBLEMS
- ➔ EVALUATING
- ➔ REFLECTING
- ➔ ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

SELF-MANAGEMENT

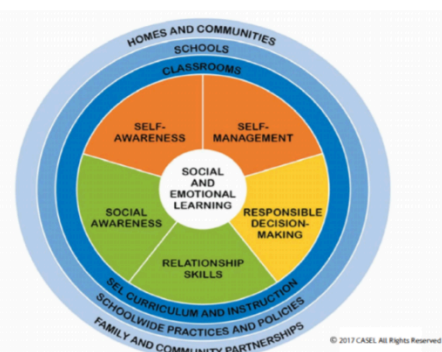
The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- ➔ IMPULSE CONTROL
- ➔ STRESS MANAGEMENT
- ➔ SELF-DISCIPLINE
- ➔ SELF-MOTIVATION
- ➔ GOAL SETTING
- ➔ ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- ➔ COMMUNICATION
- ➔ SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
- ➔ RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
- ➔ TEAMWORK



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Integration of 21st Century Skills

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view.

Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes.

Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.

Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions.

INFORMATION LITERACY

Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand.

MEDIA LITERACY

Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of media.

ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) LITERACY

Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Adapt to varied roles, jobs responsibilities, schedules and contexts.

Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities.

Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions, particularly in multi-cultural environments.

INITIATIVE AND SELF-DIRECTION

Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria.

Balance tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) goals.

Utilize time and manage workload efficiently.

Monitor, define, prioritize, and complete tasks without direct oversight.

Demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong process.

Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress.

SOCIAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS

Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak.

Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner.

Respect cultural differences and work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds.

Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values.

Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work.

PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressures.

LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY

Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal.

Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness.

Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in using influence and power.

Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind.