

Reading/Writing/Language Arts

Overview

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) elementary reading/language arts program reflects the integrated nature of a balanced literacy program. The elementary reading program provides instruction in reading and word study, including phonics, and engagement in independent reading. The elementary language arts program encompasses writing instruction, which includes the teaching of the writing process, writer's craft, conventions of language, including spelling, grammar, and independent writing. The processes of listening and speaking are integrated into all of the components of a comprehensive, balanced literacy program.

Reading

Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written text. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information. Reading is based upon five principles:

- *Reading is a constructive process*
- *Reading must be fluent*
- *Reading must be strategic*
- *Reading requires motivation*
- *Reading is a continuously developing process*

Reading involves the interrelatedness of the five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is an interactive process in which students construct and extend meaning from life's experiences, language, print, and non-print materials. Students will read for **literary experiences** (stories, plays, poems), to **gain information** (informational text, articles, resource material), and to **perform a task** (procedural material).

Writing

Writing is a process of communicating meaning. "When composing, the learner generates ideas, reviews, makes adjustments, revises, and considers changes based on established and evolving criteria." (Maryland Content Standards)

Students write for a variety of purposes. Writing for Personal Expression involves using figurative language to express thoughts and feelings in personal narratives, poetry, plays, memoirs, friendly letters, fables, folk tales, and various other literary forms. When students Write to Inform, they explain, describe, state, and organize facts about a topic, and give directions on how to perform a task. The forms they use may include articles, reports, biographies, reviews, science investigations, brochures, or speeches. The purpose of Writing to Persuade is to convince the reader to consider the writer's point of view. Persuasion may take the forms of editorials, advertisements, or requests.

Spelling

This year, students in the fifth grade will be placed in one of two fifth grade level spelling groups, Superspellers, or Wordly Wise. We feel that the approaches of these two programs will best fit the needs of our fifth grade students.

Superspellers: This program emphasizes spelling patterns, rules, prefixes, suffixes, and derivatives. Students will complete activities which explore spelling patterns, allowing them to focus on groups of letters that represent the sounds they hear in words. This helps them to visualize and remember the words, and it also helps them gain the background knowledge needed to try different options when spelling a word.

Wordly Wise: This program emphasizes vocabulary development. Students learn new words through reading, writing, and a variety of challenging exercises. This vocabulary series draws carefully selected words from literature and textbooks.

Listening and Speaking

"Listening is an active, purposeful part of the communication process that goes well beyond hearing" (MELACS-Maryland English Language Arts Content Standards). Receiving, attending to, assigning meaning for, responding to, and remembering aural messages are important aspects of listening. Listening relies on the successful processing of oral language and sentence syntax and the decoding of vocabulary in order to make meaning of the spoken word.

"Speaking is a powerful oral communication tool used for personal, academic, professional, and social purposes" (MELACS). Speaking involves the use and adjustment of

language conventions, style, and vocabulary to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and different purposes.

Speaking and listening are encompassed within opportunities for students to talk with one another as they collaborate in the learning environment, as well as through dramatic presentations, viewing opportunities (videotapes, group discussions), and social interactions.

Student/Teacher Checklist for Speaking

- Speaking clearly without mumbling
- Speaking loudly enough to be heard
- Speaking at an appropriate rate; not too fast or too slowly
- Expressing ideas logically; organizing thoughts before speaking
- Taking turns in conversations
- Asking and answering in a variety of situations
- Using newly acquired vocabulary in everyday situations
- Making eye contact with the audience

Student/Teacher Checklist for Listening

- Looking at the person speaking
- Thinking about the key words or ideas the speaker is using
- Responding appropriately to what the speaker says
- Allowing the speaker to finish speaking without interrupting
- Clarifying information given by the speaker
- Following a set of multi-step directions given orally
- Avoiding distractions; staying focused on the speaker
- Restating important information

Social Studies

Social Studies is an integrated component of the reading/language arts program. Through research, independent study, reports, and cooperative learning activities, emphasis is placed on expository reading, as well as expository writing.

Study skills such as note taking, outlining, organizing information, and creating bibliographies are an essential part of this course of study. These research skills will be enhanced by the use of new technology available, not only in our classrooms, but in the Media Center and Computer Lab.

The units of study for this school year include:

- **Citizens in Action: The Colonies Revolt**
- **Economics: Creating a New Nation**
- **The Evolving Country and Constitution**