

GRADE 4 READING/LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

The Montgomery County Public Schools 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 and grammar, and independent writing. The processes of listening and speaking are integrated into all of the components of a comprehensive, balanced literacy program.

Reading

Vocabulary Skills:

- Uses knowledge of word parts, simple root words, and word relationships (i.e., synonyms, antonyms, analogies) to determine meaning and pronunciation
- Acquires new vocabulary from reading

Reading Comprehension Strategies:

- Reads grade level text fluently (smoothly) and accurately
- Reads for different purposes: literary experience (stories, plays, poems), to be informed, to perform a task
- Applies before, during, and after reading strategies to grade level text
 - Before reading strategies
 - determines a purpose
 - previews text and formulates questions
 - uses background knowledge and preview of text to make predictions
 - During reading strategies
 - makes connections to the text
 - visualizes or makes mental pictures to understand text
 - confirms or alters predictions
 - uses strategies to fix what does not make sense
 - rereads to confirm or alter understanding
 - determines importance of information in text
 - answers or refines questions
 - makes inferences (i.e., draws conclusions, identifies cause/effect relationships)
 - identifies author's style
 - uses characteristics of fiction and informational text to aid comprehension
 - After reading strategies
 - checks for understanding
 - revisits the text to think about what was learned
 - responds to reading through discussion and writing
 - rereads to clarify or extend meaning
 - summarizes text
- Selects and independently reads at least 25 grade level appropriate books

Writing

- Uses the writing process (prewriting, first draft, revise, editing/proofreading, publishing)
- Determines purpose and audience and maintains focus for writing
- Revises writing by using criteria or checklist
- Edits writing using grade level appropriate language conventions correctly (compound and complex sentences, dialogue, varied punctuation with accuracy, usage) to clearly communicate message
- Writes independently for a variety of purposes (for personal expression, to inform, to persuade) and for an extended period of time
- Uses resources effectively to spell words
- Develops multiple paragraphs with topic sentences and details
- Uses relevant descriptions to make a topic or message clear to the reader
- Uses strong beginnings to engage the reader
- Develops a research question based on a selected topic and uses two or more resources to locate information

Listening and speaking skills and strategies are learned and applied during reading and writing instruction.

- Gathers and conveys information from listening
- Determines a speaker's point of view by tone of voice and body language
- Plans and delivers effective oral presentations and uses criteria for peer review

As students learn new skills and strategies for reading, they apply them to more and more difficult text. No one aspect or characteristic of text can be used as the sole determiner of the level of a text. Multiple aspects have implications for the reader and therefore book characteristics have to be evaluated for careful consideration and use with students.

Characteristics to consider include:

Book and Print Features, Sentence complexity, Content, Themes, Ideas, Language and literary features, and Text Structure

By examining how the book supports the developing reader and what challenges are present, students can be matched to appropriate books for small group instruction to help them progress as readers. Grade level appropriate books are designated by the following list of criteria. The characteristics provide a guide to help teachers select the best text to use for instructional purposes.

Beginning of Grade 1 text characteristics:

- consistent placement of text on the page
- repetition of 1 or 2 sentence patterns with 1 or 2 word changes
- simple oral language structures
- familiar topics, objects, and actions
- introduce basic high-frequency words

- illustrations provide a high degree of support

End of Grade 1 text characteristics:

- elaborated episodes and events
- extended descriptions
- oral language structures appear as dialogue
- literary language
- unusual or specialized vocabulary
- illustrations provide minimal support

(Adapted from *Bridges to Literacy*, DeFord, Lyons, Pinnell, 135)

Grade 2 text characteristics:

- short and easy chapter books, longer picture books with interesting vocabulary
- characters in series books
- increase in dialogue, speakers identified
- new genres introduced: legends, folktales, and biographies
- illustrations enhance the text but offers less support for understanding text meaning
- range of punctuation
- longer and more complex sentences with adjectives and adverbs
- one main plot with several episodes
- large number of words beyond high-frequency words
- three and four syllable words
- informational text: short text with strong text feature support (i.e.:illustrations, bold print, captions)

Grade 3 text characteristics:

- chapter books of about 70 – 80 pages; each chapter ranges from 5 – 15 pages
- new genres introduced: fables, realistic fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, through longer, complex picture books and easy chapter books
- several different characters, actions and interactions must be followed
- more sophisticated plots with characters that are developed throughout the text
- events build upon each other, requiring the reader to keep track of information
- more dialogue, speaker not always identified
- higher level of conceptual understanding
- many conventions of text are introduced
- sentences are complex and contain multi-syllable and content words
- words are used for a range of connotative meanings
- print size is more varied
- informational text: simple organizational patterns and text features

Grade 4 text characteristics:

- longer chapter books that present a range of problems; multiple episodes related to a single plot
- themes require interpretation and understanding

- multiple characters; development is shown through what they say and do
- new genre introduced: autobiographies
- vocabulary/terminology is sophisticated and varied; requiring interpretations of meaning
- new multi-syllable words requiring a quick analysis
- highly complex sentences require a full range of punctuation important to understanding the meaning of the text
- informational text: several organizational patterns and multiple text features

For more detailed information regarding what text is appropriate for each grade level, see the MCPS Curriculum Framework for English/Language Arts available in school media centers or at <http://mcps.k12.md.us/info/curriculum/docs/framework/ELABookleveling.pdf>.