

## Literacy Enrichment Curriculum- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade (formally Study Skills)

### OVERVIEW:

This course is provided to students who require supplementary support and instruction in reading and/or writing in addition to their Language Arts courses. While the course is built to provide students with instruction that will lead to improved scores on mandated state testing, the course is not meant to be taught explicitly as a test preparation class all of the time. Preparing kids for tests doesn't have to mean drills. Instead, we should make explicit connections between good test-taking practices and good general-learning practices.

Instruction should incorporate a variety of teaching strategies using a wide range of high-interest supplemental materials. Emphasis is on individual pacing and achievement based on previous state test scores and benchmark assessments.

### STANDARDS:

Lessons should be aligned with grade appropriate Common Core State Standards.

### USING RESEARCH TO SUPPORT BEST PRACTICES:

Research indicates that for underachieving secondary students, effective literacy programs will include the following components:

- Thoughtfully planned and structured lessons.
- Instruction aligned with state standards and assessment.
- Instruction follows an orderly progression, accommodating learner differences within the context of a clear, consistent framework.
- Learners know ahead of time what they will be asked to do, and that help will be available when they need it. This makes them feel secure and encourages risk-taking.
- Instruction is appropriate to the group.
- The curriculum and activities are designed to match students' reading and writing development levels.
- Materials are age-appropriate and are not condescending.
- There is ongoing documentation and monitoring of learning. Progress data is used to determine which skills should be addressed and how much they should be emphasized.
- Intensive instruction is based on need: students who have achieved their objectives don't have to endure repeated instruction. Success is measured by how much has been learned, and students are continually challenged to increase their learning.
- Teachers understand the goals and principles of what they are teaching. They also understand the reading and writing abilities of their students.
- The classroom atmosphere is positive.

- The program makes sense to students and gives them confidence. They understand why they have been placed in this course, and what they will be able to do when they finish.

Content is developmental and comprehensive, with various language arts strands strategically integrated throughout the curriculum. Lessons are carefully planned around a very specific knowledge base and a well-defined set of skills. Readings, exercises, and techniques are appropriate to the age of the learner.

Communication between teachers and students are defined so there is little room for misinterpretation. Teachers know what to say and what to ask in order to engage their students and to reveal their understanding of the subject matter.

Instruction depends on strong teacher guidance, close supervision and coaching, not only during lessons but also when students are working alone or in small groups. Gradually throughout the course of the program, scaffolding is removed and a more student-guided approach takes over.

Instruction is tailored to the identified strengths and needs of the students.

#### RECOMMENDED PROFESSIONAL TEXTS:

*Integrating Test Prep into Reading & Writing Workshops: Grades 3-8-* Nancy Jennison

*Literature Circles-* Harvey Daniels (Ch. 10- Middle and High School Applications)

*Notice and Note-* Kyleene Beers, Robert Probst

*Teaching Interpretation-* Sonja Cherry-Paul, Dana Johansen

*When Kids Can't Read: What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6-12-* Kyleene Beers

*Write Beside Them-* Penny Kittle

#### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

*\*This list is not exhaustive of the materials that should and can be used for instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of engaging texts and base their choices on their students' specific interests, levels, and needs.*

#### **State Test Samples:**

*Common Core Performance Coach, English Language Arts (Grade 6)-* Triumph Learning

This workbook gives students and teachers rigorous and purposeful review and practice around the types of items they can expect to see on assessment day. This preparation program scaffolds instruction and practice while exposing students to question types such as multiple-select,

matching, and extended-response. Resources are included so that teachers can differentiate or extend instruction.

### **Short Story Collections:**

Short stories can be great tools for middle school teachers. They are short and interesting enough to hold the student's interest, but can be great examples of types of literature, as well as themes, writing styles and more. New concepts are lost on students when students don't see those concepts being used in an authentic way. Without multiple examples to anchor our teaching, abstract ideas (like symbolism) and complex ideas (like characterization) are very confusing. And then, of course, there are times when we're simply looking for good literature to share with our readers. Enter the short story. This genre is perfect for the classroom because its conciseness allows teachers to model concepts immediately. Furthermore, short stories help teachers to provide multiple examples in a brief period of time.

*Guys Write for Guys Read-* Jon Scieszka

*Haunted Houses-* Robert San Souci

*Rio Grande Stories-* Carolyn Meyer

*Tales From Gold Mountain-* Paul Yee

*Tales From The Brothers Grimm and Sisters Weird-* Vivian Veide

*Tales of the Greek Heroes-* Roger Green

*Throwing Shadows-* EL Koningsburg

*Troll's Eye View-* Ellen Datlow

*Visions-* Donald Gallo

### **Poetry Collections:**

Poetry is a great way to incorporate creative and engaging text for middle school students to connect to their own worlds. Poetry is an excellent genre for helping students gain perspective on their own identities.

*All the World's a Stage-* Lee Hopkins

*A Kick in the Head-* Paul Janeczko

*No More Homework? No More Tests!-* Bruce Lansky

*Peace, Locomotion-* Jacqueline Woodson

*A Poke in The I-* Paul Janeczko

*Selected Poems-* Emily Dickinson

*A Writing Kind of Day-* Ralph Fletcher

**Novels (for literature circles/book clubs or read aloud):**

Students need practice in applying reading strategies to larger and more complex bodies of text. In addition, students will also benefit from writing in response to these texts. Texts should be chosen based on student interest, reading level, and availability of texts for book clubs and read aloud.

**High-Interest Picture Books:**

Short, interesting texts with pictures are a great tool for hooking reluctant readers.

*The Chronicles of Harris Burdick-* Chris Van Allsburg

*Every Thing On It-* Shel Silverstein

*Flotsam-* David Wiesner

*When the Beat Was Born: DJ Kool Herc and the Creation of Hip Hop-* Laban Hill

**Non-Fiction Materials:**

Students will be asked to read and interpret an increasing amount of non-fiction texts to align with the Common Core State Standards and new state standardized testing. It is crucial that struggling students have practice working with non-fiction and understand its importance for gathering information and using complex thinking skills.

*Scholastic Action Magazine- Grades 6-12*

Online News Websites- articles, commentaries, opinion pieces, etc.

Newspapers

Primary sources

Informational/Non-fiction texts based on student interest

## STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION DURING TESTING:

### 1. Encourage Purposeful Reading

We constantly emphasize reading for purpose. We want our students to know why they're reading what they're reading — for pleasure? to find information? — and to tailor their reading strategies accordingly.

We want students to be purposeful readers of standardized tests, too. To accomplish that, we don't mince words. We tell students that the reason they are reading passages is to answer questions so that they can perform well on the test. As such, students should know as much as possible about the questions prior to reading the passage.

### 2. Cover All Kinds of Questions

To prepare students for the kinds of items they'll see on the test, we ask them a variety of questions about their reading. Our questions are meant to enhance comprehension and promote a range of interpretations — literal, inferential, personal, and so on.

However, just asking the right kinds of questions isn't enough; it's important to explain them as well.

*"Right There" Questions:* The answer to these questions is right there in the passage. To find it, students recall information from or refer back to one place in the passage. Example: "Who gave John the dog?"

*"Think and Search" Questions:* Students can also find the answer to these questions by using their memories or looking back at the passage. However, the answer is usually in more than one place. Students need to assemble information for the answer. Example: "What was the same about every dog in the story?"

*"Author and You" Questions:* These questions are often the toughest because they can't be answered just by reading the passage. Students need to use what they already know, plus what they learn from the passage, to answer. Example: "How did John probably feel when he found the dog?"

### 3. Teach Text Structure

Lessons on story organization, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and other text structures are important parts of both literacy training and test preparation.

Many test passages are written in a standard format; understanding that format will give students a leg up in reading passages and locating answers. You've probably seen slow test takers who, for each question, reread a passage from the beginning until they come across an answer. Students need to be more efficient than that.

Teaching Tip: After reading a story passage with a clear beginning, middle, and end, have students guess which parts will contain the answers to comprehension questions. Help students see the following patterns:

- Answers about when and where the story takes place are often found at the beginning.
- Answers about a problem in the story are usually found in the middle.
- Answers about how the problem was resolved are frequently found at the end.
- Knowing where to look will save students valuable time.

### STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING WRITING WHILE TESTING:

1. Identify the type of writing prompt:

- Narrative
- Informational
- Argumentative/Opinion

2. Use what you know about each type of writing to form an appropriate response:

- Utilize the 6<sup>th</sup> grade writing checklists utilized in Language Arts classes for writing workshop and on-demand assessments.

3. To get the highest score:

- Use specific information from the text to support your explanations or opinions.
- Add your own thinking to tell more about each piece of proof, so you can show that you really thought about your answer.
- Link your thinking back to the text to explain how your insight fits.
- Answer all parts of the question.

### SUGGESTED DAILY SCHEDULE:

**1. Possible Daily Warm-up-** (10 minutes)

- Word Ladders (Tim Rasinski)
- Word Sorts- Students categorize words based on patterns or commonalities among words.
- Sentence Stalking- Use sentences from read aloud or other common texts in order to have students “stalk” a sentence and take note of what the author did correctly or well.
- Turn and Talk.... – Prompt students to discuss their own reading/writing, classroom texts, opinions, etc.
- Sample State Test Questions- It is important to discuss not only the correct response, but why the answer is correct and what strategies can be used to arrive at the best choice.
- Writing response to video or picture using close reading strategies.

**2. Possible Daily Activities-** This portion of class should offer a selection of teaching and learning structures based on student need. These activities are meant to be varied in order to keep students engaged and motivated. Students should be aware of the expectations and structure of each activity. (35 minutes)

- **Read Aloud**

- Teacher reads aloud selected text while modeling strategies that good readers use. Students participate in a variety of reading and writing activities in response to the day's reading. Examples- journal responses, post-it note responses, discussion with book partners or groups, etc.

- **Literature Circles/Book Clubs**

- Teachers or students may choose their own reading materials based on text availability and student level.
- Small temporary groups are formed, based upon book choice, level/need.
- Groups meet on a regular, predictable schedule to discuss their reading.
- Kids use written or drawn notes to guide both their reading and discussion.
- When possible, discussion topics come from the students. Teacher guidance may be needed here.
- Group meetings aim to be open, natural conversations about books, so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are welcome.
- In newly-forming groups, students may play a rotating assortment of task roles.
- The teacher serves as a facilitator, not a group member or instructor.
- Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.

- **Readers Theater**

- Students become excited and enthusiastic about reading when they are presented with the opportunity to participate in Readers Theatre. Students develop or use pre-written scripts, perform in groups, and practice using their voice to depict characters from texts. Through this activity, students have the opportunity to develop fluency and further enhance comprehension of what they are reading.

- **Guided Writing Groups**

- Guided writing is taught to small groups in briskly paced lessons. These groupings should be flexible, based on observation of students' current needs, and might be implemented following a whole-class writing lesson.
  - ❖ Engage students in a brief, shared experience. You might read a short but fascinating section of an informational text, for example, or conduct a brief experiment.
  - ❖ Teach one or two specific strategies for writing.
  - ❖ Provide students with time (5-10 minutes) to write at the small-group table but individually and as independently as possible.

- ❖ Provide immediate individual guidance and feed forward while students write, assisting individual students in anticipation of needed reminders or assistance). Monitor students while they write and "lean in" in order to prompt and guide their thinking.
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- ❖ Include a brief sharing activity in which each writer's immediate work is shared with an audience. This sharing will allow each writer to experience his/her newly written text as a whole.

- **Guided Reading Groups**

- Guided reading gives teachers the opportunity to observe students as they read from texts at their instructional reading levels. This strategy guide describes ideas that support guided reading, including practical suggestions for implementing it in the classroom; introduces guided reading; and includes a reading list for further investigation.
  - ❖ Here is a general task list to consider before initiating guided reading instruction.
    1. Look for trends across classroom data. Cluster students into groups based on their state test scores, their skills, and how they solve problems when reading. Make groups flexible, based on student growth and change over time. If you must compromise reading level to assemble a group, always put students into an easier text rather than a more difficult one.
    2. Select a text that gives students the opportunity to engage in a balanced reading process.
    3. Plan a schedule for working with small groups, and organize materials for groups working independently. Independent work should be as closely connected to authentic reading and writing as possible.
  - ❖ Individual lessons vary based on student needs and particular texts, but try this general structure.
    1. Familiar rereading—Observe and make notes while students read books from earlier guided reading lessons.

2. Introduction—Ask students to examine the book to see what they notice. Support students guiding themselves through a preview of the book and thinking about the text. Students may notice the book’s format or a particular element of the print.
3. Reading practice—Rotate from student to student while they read quietly or silently. Listen closely and make anecdotal notes. Intervene and prompt rarely, with broad questions like “What will you do next?”
4. Discussion—Let students talk about what they noticed while reading. Support their efforts to think deeply and connect across the whole book.
5. Teaching point—Offer a couple of instructions based on observations made during reading. Teaching points are most valuable when pointing to new things that students are demonstrating or ask for reflection on how they solved problems.

**Please note: There may come a time during Enrichment when students will bring in work from their language arts classes that they are struggling to understand. It would be beneficial to help the students with the assignments as soon as possible if there is instructional time available. It is appropriate to provide guidance and support as needed.**

### **3. Exit Activity- Exit Slip (3 minutes)**

- They provide teachers with an informal measure of how well students have understood a topic or lesson.
- They help students reflect on what they learn.
- They allow students to express how or what they are thinking about new information.
- They teach students to thinking critically.
- Students will complete exit slip on a post-it using one of the following prompts:

\*Prompts that document learning:

—Example: Write one thing you learned today.

—Example: Discuss how today's lesson could be used in the real world.

\*Prompts that emphasize the process of learning:

—Example: I didn't understand...

—Example: Write one question you have about today's lesson.

\*Prompts to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction:

—Example: Did you enjoy working in small groups today?

\*Other exit prompts include:

—I would like to learn more about...

—Please explain more about...

—The thing that surprised me the most today was...

—I wish...

- Students should have access to possible exit slip prompts from which to choose.
- Review the exit slips to determine how you may need to alter your instruction to better meet the needs of all your students.
- Collect the exit slips as a part of an assessment portfolio for each student.

## ASSESSMENT

Teachers should utilize data from previous state test scores, DRA scores, and benchmark assessments. This should guide instruction with an emphasis on individual pacing and achievement.

Informal monitoring and assessments should be used to provide feedback quickly and regularly.

\*A note on homework: This course is designed to supplement students' current coursework and is not meant to overload the student. Assigning homework regularly is not recommended for this course.

\*Suggestion for grading- This is a graded course and students should have several opportunities to receive credit in class and be held accountable. One possible method for assigning grades for this class is to allow students to earn a maximum of 10 points during every class. The suggested point breakdown is as follows:

1 point= being prepared for class, having all required materials

2 points= completing daily warm-up

5 points= participation and effort in lesson/activity

2 points= completing daily exit slip