

September 19, 2013

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Over the summer, our district made a decision to move to a more challenging and rigorous English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum in grades UPK-8. This new curriculum was developed by the State of New York to line-up with the State's Common Core Learning Standards. These standards were adopted two years ago, and the aligned State assessments were new last year. This new curriculum focuses on:

- using more non-fiction texts,
- engages students in more than one subject area, often using science and/or social studies as a way to teach the skills and concepts in ELA,
- and asks students to explain their answers using evidence found in the readings.

Domains in grades Pre-K-2 and Modules in grades 3-8, are different than what we have used in the past, such as; the ways lessons are presented, the activities children are to complete, and what we ask of our children in the classroom and at home. Our teachers have spent considerable time this summer preparing for this change. The professional development and curriculum work that was done over the summer will continue throughout the year. We also have been and will continue to work with other districts in our area that have made the transition to modules and domains.

Below is a snapshot from EngageNY of the new curriculum:

New York State ELA Curriculum Domains for Grades Pre-K-2

The New York State ELA Curriculum for grades Pre-K-2 is made up of the following components:

The **Listening and Learning** strand lessons, comprised of teacher read-alouds, class discussion, vocabulary work, and extension activities, build on the research finding that students' listening comprehension outpaces their reading comprehension throughout elementary school. These read-alouds and exercises are organized in 11 to 12 domains (units) per grade. Each domain is dedicated to a particular topic, and the class stays focused on that topic or theme for 10 to 15 days of instruction. The domains build on each other within and across grades.

The **Skills** strand teaches reading and writing. Children practice blending (reading) and segmenting (spelling) using the sound spellings they have learned through a mock phonics approach. Handwriting, spelling, and the writing process are also presented in the Skills strand.

Depending on the grade level, children may be required to switch rooms for part of their ELA period. This will allow for instruction at each child's ability level, another way to differentiate instruction. This targeted instruction will ensure your child is learning at their greatest potential and in a place for maximum success.

New York State ELA Curriculum Modules for Grades 3-8

The New York State Grades 3-8 ELA curriculum includes six modules that focus on reading, writing, listening, and speaking in response to high-quality texts. Each module is intended to last a quarter of a school year; the addition of two extra modules allows for teacher choice throughout the year. Modules may include several units and each unit may include a set of sequenced progressions of learning experiences that build knowledge and engage students in the understanding of major concepts. The State has provided packets for our teachers that include daily lesson plans, guiding questions, recommended texts, strategies that build upon prior learning, examples of skilled student work, and other classroom resources. Each module will conclude in an end-of-module performance task, which can provide information to our teachers on whether students in their classrooms are achieving the standards.

With any change, there is an uncertainty of the unknown. This curriculum shift will benefit all students – no matter who they are – to learn the same skills. These changes may be tough at first as students and teachers adjust to higher expectations, but it will benefit our students as they begin their journey for college and career readiness.

As a parent, you can help and learn more by talking with your child about what they are learning. Ask open-ended questions about what they learned in school each day, read their homework and attend school events to learn about what their teachers expect.

Thank you for your continued support and should you have questions, please visit www.engageny.org or call the main office.

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