

Overview of Middle School English Language Arts for Families

Grade 6

Wake County Public Schools Middle School English Language Arts (ELA) classes provide students the opportunity to engage in reading, writing, speaking and listening each day. Your child's teacher provides strong instruction using *EL Education*, a standards-aligned curriculum that emphasizes close reading, active learning and student engagement. Classrooms are structured with highly collaborative activities that allow students to engage in academic conversations and study rich academic topics.

What will my middle schooler be doing in class?

The year is divided into four modules and each module is about nine weeks in length. During each module, students build background knowledge about a topic. They engage in research guided by essential questions. They read a variety of literary and informational texts as well as digital resources which are provided to all students. Students engage in critical thinking to gather evidence to support their thinking or claims about the featured topic or issue. In the journey to develop their own perspectives, students collaborate and communicate with their peers. Students are ultimately able to create products (performance tasks) to capture and share their learning and demonstrate perseverance by taking responsibility and initiative for completing high-quality work. Grammar and conventions are incorporated into reading and writing lessons.

What will my middle schooler be doing at home?

Students will extend their learning experiences at home, continuing to read and write each day. As a family, you may have opportunities to engage in conversations around topics of study and current events. Students will also engage in independent reading of choice.

What can I do to support my middle schooler with English Language Arts?

- You may want to consider reading the texts and sharing your own experiences related to the topic. Engage in conversations by asking probing questions about your child's learning experience such as:
 - What new information did you learn about?
 - What does this new learning remind you of?
 - What do you wonder about?
 - How can I help you find out more?
 - What questions do you have?
- Read your child's writing, or have your child read his/her writing aloud to you. Not only will you as a parent or guardian begin to understand your child's thinking, but you can also help your child clarify his/her own thinking by talking through the writing process with him/her.
- Ask your child what he/she is doing for research around the topic.
- Support your child with independent reading (ie. encourage your child to go to your school's media center or public library, encourage time and space for independent reading at home).

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Module 1: Myths: Not Just Long Ago

Students read *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan along with informational texts and Greek myths, examining the idea of a hero's journey. They write a literary essay analyzing how understanding a classic myth helps their understanding of the novel and they write their own Hero's Journey narrative based on their learning. Students will enhance speaking and listening skills by engaging in discussions about the texts and sharing their writing with their peers.

Standards-aligned Questions:

- What is the hero's journey in literature?
- How do you cite textual evidence when analyzing literature and informational texts?
- How does an author develop theme in a literary work?
- What are the elements of a narrative essay?

Module 2: Voices of Adversity

Students read *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* by Laura Amy Schlitz and *Technically, It's Not My Fault: Concrete Poems* by John Grandits, exploring the idea of adversity of people across time and place. Students engage in various types of writing - informational essay, argument and narrative. Speaking and listening skills are assessed through small group discussions around the texts. Students will create their own monologue or concrete poem around a modern-day adversity.

Standards-aligned Questions:

- How do authors use language to convey theme and meaning in a literary text?
- What are the elements of an explanatory essay?
- How does reading for research help me to form an opinion and make an argument?

Module 3: Sustaining the Oceans

Students build background knowledge by reading *World Without Fish* by Mark Kurlansky and then dive into the novel *Flush* to learn about point of view and perspective. Through close reading, students will learn multiple strategies for acquiring and using academic vocabulary. Students will conduct research to write an informative consumer guide and will practice speaking and listening skills by presenting their guide to their peers.

Standards-aligned Questions:

- How does an author develop the narrator's point of view and perspective?
- How does an author's geographic location affect his perspective, and how is that perspective communicated through his writing?
- How does an author's purpose affect the narrator's point of view?

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Module 4: Insecticides: Costs vs. Benefits

Students read *Frightful's Mountain* by Jean Craighead to practice citing evidence and drawing inferences as they begin to think about the interactions between people and the natural world. They also read and view other sources to gather evidence and trace arguments. Students will engage in a decision-making framework to research and collect relevant information on how various choices impact consequences. Students will write an essay explaining their claims and create a scientific poster to present to peers.

Standards-aligned Questions:

- How do different authors approach providing information and making an argument?
- How does reading for research help me to form an opinion and make an argument?
- What are effective speaking techniques that will help me give a strong presentation?

Resources from the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

[DPI 6th Grade Parent Guide](#)

[DPI 6th Grade Parent Guide \(Spanish\)](#)

[DPI 6th Grade Parent eBooklet](#)