

The Department's Educational Philosophy

The need to communicate is central to humanity. Young adolescents, in particular, need to communicate their views of self and the world as a means of understanding and defining, and expanding their thinking. Through writing and reading the writings of others, we believe young adolescents grow in their ability to think and to understand themselves and their relationships.

Appreciation of written expression, both one's own and that of others, is the core of the R. J. Grey Jr. High School English Curriculum. Through the discipline of writing and through the study of published works of literature and non-fiction, we believe that the students develop not only their communication skills but also a life-long love of learning.

Guiding Principles

- Write well in a variety of forms.
- Read accurately and with critical insight and analytical judgment.
- Participate effectively in discussions and other oral activities.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of language in writing, reading, and speaking.
- Demonstrate personal involvement in and enjoyment of the spoken and written word.

ENGLISH: GRADE 7 and 8

Course Frequency: 260 minutes per week; the frequency depends on the team schedule. The class might meet in single blocks daily, double blocks every other day, or a combination of the two.

Credits Offered: It is a required course for the junior high school. No credits are offered.

Prerequisites: None

Background to the Curriculum

The basic framework, topics, skills and objectives have been in place for many years, thanks to strong departmental leadership. The essential skills reflect the basic communication skills of reading and writing, with a strong focus on effective written communication. As a department we continually review and update the curriculum – adding new literature titles, updating thematic units, developing new thematic units to connect with the social studies curriculum, checking the alignment of our skill objectives with state standards.

The essential skills and objectives are consistent with the Massachusetts Curriculum frameworks. Differentiated instruction provides opportunities for students to develop and achieve at their own rate, most consistently demonstrating above-grade-level mastery.

Thematic Units

Thematic units and genre studies comprise the curriculum content. Each unit consists of focus questions about the theme or genre and activities that address these questions and provide opportunities for students to develop and address the essential skills. Students are actively involved in a range of activities within the communication spectrum, either individually or with groups of varying sizes. These units, from which teachers select three to five a year according to their needs and interests, are divided between grades seven and eight.

Each unit is designed to reflect the interests and needs of the early adolescent. In many units, to provide for individual differences and interests, students have a choice of readings. They are introduced to several novels, varying in story line and reading difficulty, but all on the unit theme. Audio versions of several novels are available at the school library or can be obtained from local libraries. Students also may have independent reading opportunities throughout the year. The choice of thematic units and the literature involved in the unit may vary from team to team and year to year; however, the *Essential Skills and Objectives* are consistent for all students.

Core Topics/Concepts/Skills

The continuing development of communication skills is the primary focus of the R. J. Grey English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. The overall learning goals for the students are the following:

- To write for a variety of purposes: to support an idea, to tell a story, to inform or explain
- To read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of literary texts
- To read, comprehend, and analyze a variety of informational texts
- To demonstrate proficiency in English grammar and usage while speaking and writing
- To demonstrate presentation skills
- To use collaborative skills for a common purpose

The specific skills and objectives for each grade align with the Common Core State Standards for Massachusetts and follow a K-12 learning continuum. Further information can be found on our district curriculum website:

https://www.abschools.org/district/who_we_are/curriculum_standards.

Assessment

- Writing assignments and/or parts of the writing process: Teachers provide rubrics employing FCAs (Focus Correction Areas), using the John Collins framework, “Writing Across the Curriculum.”
- Literal and inferential comprehension questions based on the reading
- Reading response journals and other reflective activities
- Oral presentations
- Projects
- Quizzes, tests, and application of grammar skills and concepts
- Paired or grouped discussions on readings and/or projects
- Portfolio assessments

Materials and Resources

Teacher-developed thematic units: Held in a common area and central to the curriculum, these units contain the rationale, focus questions, objectives, and teacher assignments accumulated over several years. Included are suggestions for reading from our anthology and from the class sets of books and novels owned by the department.

Prentice-Hall Literature Anthology, *Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes*, 2005. Bronze level – grade 7; silver level – grade 8 with many supplementary resources, including audio versions.

The Writer's Craft. New York : McDougall, Littell & Company, 1994. Red: grade 7; Green: Grade 8: 1 class set in each room

Write Source 2000: A Guide to Writing, Thinking, and Learning. Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Professional reference books are located in the English bookroom.

Audio-visual: Many of the curriculum books are available on tape or CD in the school library. Others are easily accessible at the town library.

School library: The librarian is available to give “book talks” on a theme, a genre, and/or open-ended free choice, independent “good reads.”

Reading titles for Grade 7 (class sets of novels and short stories)

Anne Frank

Anne of Avonlea

Anne of Green Gables

Birthday Murder

Break With Charity

Call of the Wild

Child of the Owl

Chinese American Literature

Contender

Crazy Lady

December Stillness

Dogsong

Fellowship of the Ring

Flesh and Blood so Cheap

Freedom Songs

Glory Field

Hatchet

Hobbit

Holly's Secret

Homecoming

Incident at Hawk's Hill

Island on Bird Street

Johnny Tremain

Journey to America

Just Like Martin

Kidnapped

Let the Circle be Unbroken

Lupita Manana

Lyddie

Man Who Was Poe

Mirror for Witches
Misfits
My Brother Sam Is Dead
Name of the Game Was Murder
Rebecca
Red Pony
Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon
Return of the King
River
Road From Home
Road to Memphis
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
Souder
Summer of My German Soldier
Summer to Die
Tales of Mystery and Suspense

Talking Earth
Thief in the Village
Tituba of Salem Village
Tom Sawyer
Treasure Island
True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle
Two Towers
Westing Game
Where the Red Fern Grows
Which Way Freedom
White Fang w/Call of Wild
Witch of Blackbird Pond
Witness
Wonder
Words by Heart
Year of Impossible Goodbyes