Department of Education
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Council of the Great City Schools

# parent ROADMAP

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN GRADE EIGHT

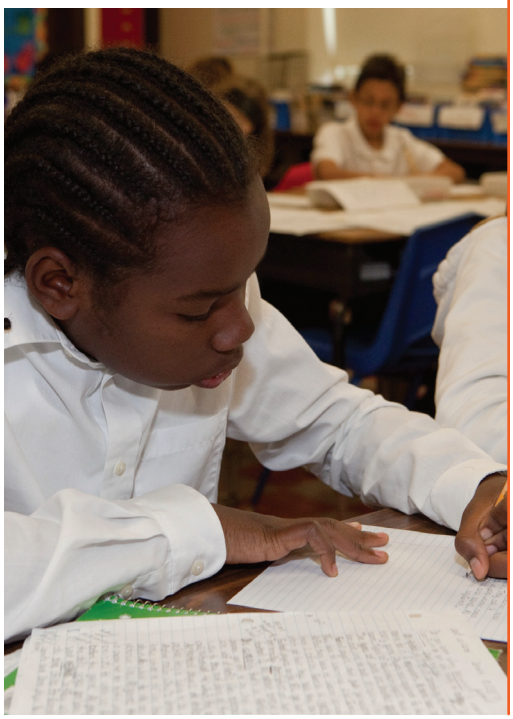
## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

*America's schools are working to provide higher quality instruction than ever before.*

The way we taught students in the past simply does not prepare them for the higher demands of college and careers today and in the future. Your school and schools throughout the country are working to improve teaching and learning to ensure that all children will graduate high school with the skills they need to be successful.

In English language arts and literacy, this means three major changes. Students will continue reading and writing. But in addition to stories and literature, they will read more texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas including science and social studies. They will read more challenging texts, and be asked more questions that will require them to refer back to what they have read. There will also be an increased emphasis on building a strong vocabulary so that students can read and understand challenging material.

## *What your child will be learning in grade eight English language arts and literacy*



In grade eight, students will read major works of fiction and nonfiction from all over the world and from different time periods. They will continue to learn how to understand what they read and evaluate an author's assumptions and claims. They will also conduct research that will require the analysis of resources and accurate interpretation of literary and informational text. Activities in these areas will include:

- Identifying what a reading selection explicitly says and drawing inferences based on evidence from the text
- Analyzing the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts
- Evaluating the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient
- Connecting information and ideas efficiently and effectively in writing
- Analyzing the purpose of information presented in diverse media formats, such as video clips or interactive maps
- Participating in class discussions on various topics, texts, and issues by expressing ideas and building on the ideas of others
- Developing a large vocabulary of multi-use academic words and phrases
- Interpreting figures of speech, such as puns or verbal irony, in context

*"Verbal irony" is when words are used to say something other than their usual meaning. For example, calling something "as clear as mud" in order to say something isn't clear at all.*

## *Partnering with your child's teacher*

Don't be afraid to reach out to your child's teacher—you are an important part of your child's education. Ask to see a sample of your child's work or bring a sample with you. Ask the teacher questions like:

- Is my child producing quality work?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- What additional support or resources can I provide my child at home?

*In grade eight, students will read a wide range of literature, including stories, plays, and poems. Additionally, they will read to learn information about history, the world, science, and other areas. Here are just a few examples of how your child will develop important reading skills across grade levels.*

## READING LITERATURE

| Grade Seven Reading | Grade Eight Reading | Grade Nine Reading |
|---|---|---|
| • Students determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text. Students also provide an objective summary of the text.<br>• Students analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text. | • Students determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot. Students also provide an objective summary of the text.<br>• Students analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader create such effects as suspense or humor. | • Students determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details. Students provide an objective summary of the text.<br>• Students analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States. |

## READING FOR INFORMATION

| Grade Seven Reading | Grade Eight Reading | Grade Nine Reading |
|---|---|---|
| • Students cite several pieces of evidence from the text to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.<br>• Students compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (such as how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words). | • Students cite evidence from the text that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.<br>• Students evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (such as print or digital text, video, or multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea. | • Students cite strong and thorough evidence from the text to support an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.<br>• Students analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (such as a person's life story recounted in print, video, and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account. |

*As they progress through grade levels, students will be asked more questions that require them to cite details or information from increasingly challenging texts. This will encourage them to become observant and analytical readers.*

*Writing tasks in grade eight may include stories, essays, reports, and persuasive papers. Here are just a few examples of how your child will develop important writing skills across grade levels.*

| Grade Seven Writing | Grade Eight Writing | Grade Nine Writing |
|---|---|---|
| • Students introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow, and develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information.<br>• Students provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.<br>• Students organize ideas, concepts, and information using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect.<br>• Students use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.<br>• Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. | • Students introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow, and develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information.<br>• Students provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.<br>• Students organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.<br>• Students use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.<br>• Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary to inform or explain the topic. | • Students introduce a topic and develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.<br>• Students provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (such as articulating implications or the significance of the topic).<br>• Students organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions.<br>• Students use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.<br>• Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary appropriate for the complexity of the topic. |

*Some writing guidelines may seem similar from year to year. However, with practice at each grade level, students continue to learn and apply the rules of standard written English and to strengthen and expand their vocabulary, use of language, and sophistication in the development and organization of ideas.*

## *Helping your child learn outside of school*

1. Provide time and space for your child to read independently. This time should be free from distractions such as television.
2. Ask your child what topics, events, or activities he or she likes. Then subscribe to magazines or look for books or other materials about those topics that would motivate your child to read.
3. It is also helpful when your child sees other people reading at home. You could share what you have read.
4. Make time for conversation at home. Discuss current events, shared interests, and future aspirations for education and career.
5. Visit museums, zoos, theaters, historical sites, aquariums, and other educational places to help increase your child's exposure to new knowledge and vocabulary.
6. Use technology to help build your child's interest in reading. There are several websites where students can read books or articles online. The computer will help with words the student cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers students can use to access those sites. Feel free to ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

## *Additional Resources*

For more information on the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy, go to http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/key-points-in-english-language-arts or http://www.commoncoreworks.org.