Department of Education
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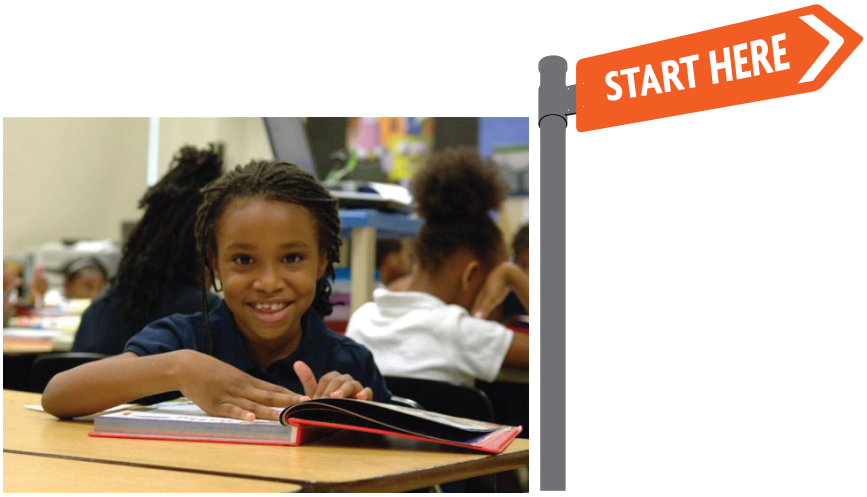
Council of the Great City Schools

parent ROADMAP

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN GRADE FOUR

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 four English language arts and literacy

In grade four, students will continue to build important reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. They will read more challenging literature, articles, and other sources of information and continue to grow their vocabulary. They will also be expected to clearly explain in detail what they have read by referring to details or information from the text. In writing, students will organize their ideas and develop topics with reasons, facts, details, and other information. Activities in these areas will include:

- Identifying the theme or main idea of a story, play, or poem
- Comparing stories from different cultures
- Explaining how an author uses facts, details, and evidence to support their points
- Reading and understanding information presented in charts, graphs, timelines, and other illustrations
- Learning the rules of spoken and written English
- Learning and using new words, including words related to specific subjects (such as science words)
- Participating in class discussions by listening, asking questions, sharing ideas, and building on the ideas of others
- Giving a class presentation on a topic or telling a story using relevant, organized facts and details and speaking clearly
- Writing stories with dialogue and descriptions of character's actions, thoughts, and feelings
- Taking notes and organizing information from books, articles, and online sources to learn more about a topic
- Writing research or opinion papers over extended periods of time

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 at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
- What do you think is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
- Where is my child excelling? How can I support this success?

In grade four, 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 Three Reading	Grade Four Reading	Grade Five Reading
• Students recount stories and determine the central message, lesson, or moral, explaining how it is developed in the text. • Students distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.	• Students determine the theme of a story, play, or poem from details in the text and summarize the text. • Students compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are told, including the difference between first- and third-person accounts.	• Students determine the theme of a story, play, or poem from details in the text, including how characters respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic, and students summarize the text. • Students describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

READING FOR INFORMATION

Grade Three Reading	Grade Four Reading	Grade Five Reading
• Students ask and answer questions about what they read by referring directly to parts of the text. • Students use information gained from images or illustrations.	• Students refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. • Students interpret information presented in charts, graphs, or other visual sources of information and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text.	• Students quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. • Students draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

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 four 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 Three Writing	Grade Four Writing	Grade Five Writing
• Students introduce a topic and use facts, definitions, and details to develop points. • Students provide a concluding statement or section. • Students group related information together. • Students use linking words and phrases to connect ideas, such as *also*, *another*, and *but*.	• Students introduce a topic clearly and develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information. • Students provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented. • Students group related information in paragraphs and sections and use formatting (such as headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful. • Students link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (such as *another, for example, also,* and *because*). • Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary.	• Students introduce a topic clearly, providing a general observation and focus, and develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information. • Students provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented. • Students group related information logically and use formatting (such as headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful. • Students link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (such as *in contrast* or *especially*). • Students use precise language and subject-specific vocabulary.

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 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 he or she learned from reading and how that knowledge can be used in real life. Have him or her read the most interesting or useful sections aloud.
3. It is also helpful when your child sees other people reading at home. You could share what you have read.
4. Keep track of the time that your child spends reading every day. Note what kind of reading materials he or she likes (books, magazines, newspaper articles, the Internet, etc.). Then look for additional materials that would encourage your child to read more.
5. Be sure your child has a library card. Children should select books they are interested in to develop a passion for reading. Many libraries have book clubs and family activities that make reading fun for the entire family.
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.