

Curricular Units & Student Workload

Students in 7th grade Language Arts will be very busy this year working on many skills in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening!

Curricular Unit Overview:

Reading - In 7th grade, we aim to develop readers who have a strong independent reading life. In doing so, we expect students to be active readers - in class, during Advisory and outside of class 30-40 minutes a day (approximately 140 pages per week). On average, students will be provided with up to 30 minutes of reading time in school, but will be expected to read outside of school everyday. Other aspects of a strong independent reading life include reading books of personal interest and getting into the zone of reading quickly and easily. Students will be encouraged to read books of their choice and will also be members of periodic Book Clubs where they'll be reading and working with classmates. Additional curricular aspects of reading we'll be exploring include strengthening the use of many different reading strategies (predicting, inferring, determining main idea, close reading, etc.) that help us to become even better readers. Students will work on and learn how to be purposeful, academic readers in addition to reading for enjoyment. [Independent Reading Life Checklist](#)

Writing - Our primary curriculum is the Units of Study in Writing, developed by Lucy Calkins. This will be our third year using this approach and we have seen wonderful results and great writers emerging from our classes! During Quarter One, students will learn more about narrative writing techniques and author their own piece of narrative fiction writing. Quarter Two brings with it a unit that melds together reading and writing. Students will be involved in deeper reading of a favorite novel in order to create an informative companion guide to that novel. Argumentative techniques and style will be the focus in both Quarter Three and Four.

Speaking and Listening - We want students to be active participants in class each day. In doing so, we'll be engaged in whole group, small group, partner and independent work. Our goal is to foster a community of learners who work to continuously grow as learners. Doing so will involve conversations and discussions during class and developing the ability to actively listen to, speak with, and interact with one another. While we won't be completing any formal speeches, we will be speaking and listening in class each day.

Student Workload:

To put it simply, the workload of a 7th grade Language Arts student varies and can vary greatly. Some read more quickly than others. Some experience writer's block longer than others. Sometimes we'll easily accomplish our work during class time, while other days we may only get a brief time to begin our work. During class, we are busy every single day. We have a lot to learn and work on in our 80 minute block (which begins to feel too short when we have a lot to accomplish). We do our best to minimize interruptions, give students the focus time and support they need, and maximize our work time together.

We also know and understand that students are busier now than ever before and that homework can sometimes be difficult to manage with a busy after-school schedule. We do our very best not to inundate students with work outside of class each and every day, but there will be times when students will have work to complete outside of class. Sometimes this may be a simple 10-15 minutes spent annotating a text or completing a reading response. While other times it could be up to an hour working on a draft of a written piece. If students are utilizing their class time consistently and well, their outside of class workload will not be substantial on a day-to-day basis.

We do expect that all students read daily outside of class. However, if Tuesday is an exceptionally busy night, then read more on Wednesday or over the weekend. Audiobooks are a great solution for those of us who can't read in the car.

Tutorials will be offered by Language Arts teachers most days both before and after school. Please encourage students to attend tutorial if they need assistance or just a quiet place to work at school.

We also know balance between school and home is a critical aspect of middle school. Please let me know if you find that your student is spending an excessive amount of time (over an hour on a consistent basis) working on Language Arts work outside of class. We can then work together to make sure that his/her outside of class workload is manageable each day.