

Sixth – Eighth Grade

Overview

Student Characteristics

Individual middle school students progress from preadolescence to adolescence at vastly different rates. They undergo physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes that affect their daily learning experiences. Sensitive to the perceptions of peers, they are beginning to assert their independence when dealing with adults. However, this process is neither sequential nor predictable, and often includes periods of fluctuation between adolescence and preadolescence. Students begin to broaden their literacy repertoire with exposure to additional genres, new writing forms, advanced literary elements, and extended vocabularies. In turn, the newly acquired communication skills lead to increased critical-thinking abilities. As middle school students move from concrete thinking to abstract concepts, they begin to question others' messages and points of view while learning to express and justify their own.

Instructional Environment

Middle school students exhibit the full range of learning styles and require both differentiated instruction and assessment opportunities to reach their unique potential as learners. Students extend grammar, spelling, and vocabulary concepts mastered in English language arts into other curricular areas. Reading strategies afford students powerful tools for comprehension in every content area. Similarly, strong writing skills give students a means for expressing their knowledge, beliefs, and opinions to various audiences. Students develop questioning and research strategies that assist them in organizing and presenting information in oral, visual, and written formats.

Scope of Content

Through reading, students acquire information and build knowledge about a variety of topics, places, and people. Literature exposes students to different genres and allows them to interpret the author's meaning while developing critical-thinking skills. Students in Grades 6-8 use writing and language to express themselves clearly and to justify their thoughts and experiences. Oral and visual communication enhances their ability to articulate ideas and to react appropriately to what they have read and heard. Through research and inquiry, students acquire the necessary tools for gathering and analyzing information for formal and informal purposes.

Literature

Classrooms in Grades 6-8 provide easy access to a variety of reading materials through classroom libraries and teacher-planned trips to school libraries. Both classroom instruction and stories and books for independent, self-selected reading include multicultural selections from classics and contemporary authors of mystery or suspense, fantasy, science fiction, adventure, plays, poetry, and nonfiction. Students make choices about much of their independent reading that will contribute to the appreciation and enjoyment of varied reading materials throughout their lives.

Sixth Grade

Sixth-grade students are transitioning from childhood to adolescence, which is characterized by physical, social, emotional, and cognitive changes. Students in this grade continue to build upon previous learning through knowledge and use of literature, writing, and communication skills. They are encouraged and given more opportunities to express themselves and share information in a variety of formats that support creativity and some risk-taking in the use of language.

Grade 6 students assume a more analytical approach to literature. They explore a wider repertoire of literary works that illustrate the linguistic and cultural diversity found in today's society. Students compose persuasive essays with an increased awareness of grammar conventions and writing mechanics as well as an awareness of the importance of using an extended vocabulary. They continue to broaden their knowledge of research and inquiry strategies and oral and visual communication skills.

MINIMUM REQUIRED CONTENT

Students will:

Reading

1. Apply strategies, including making complex predictions, interpreting characters' behaviors, and comparing and contrasting, to comprehend sixth-grade recreational reading materials.
Examples: complex predictions—order of events, potential conflicts
 - Identifying supporting details
 - Using context clues to determine meaning
 - Identifying sequence of events
 - Making generalizations from text information
2. Interpret literary elements and devices, including implied main idea, conflict, and personification.
 - Identifying the climax
3. Apply strategies that include making complex predictions, identifying the likely source of a text, and comparing to comprehend sixth-grade informational and functional reading materials.
Examples: complex predictions—results of actions, expected learning from a chapter or unit
 - Drawing conclusions to extend meaning
 - Making generalizations
 - Using context clues to determine meaning
 - Identifying sequence of events
 - Previewing text features before readingExample: headings

6th

4. Recognize the use of text elements, including implied main idea, explicit cause-effect relationships, and persuasive techniques, in sixth-grade informational and functional reading materials.
 - Identifying details related to main idea

Literature

5. Analyze short stories, novels, plays, myths, and nonfiction materials for distinguishing characteristics.
 - Identifying odes, ballads, epic poetry, and science fiction
 - Identifying figurative language in various literature selections
6. Identify the author's purpose as entertainment, information, or persuasion in selected works.
7. Identify examples of literary selections that illustrate linguistic and cultural diversity.
Examples: *The Keeping Quilt*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, *Red Scarf Girl*, *Habibi*, *Romiette and Julio*

Writing and Language

8. Compose in persuasive mode for a specific purpose and audience, including clearly stated opinions with supporting details and reasons or examples to influence thought or action.
 - Using the steps of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing in all forms of written composition
 - Demonstrating use of graphic organizers for prewriting and drafting
Examples: outlines, Venn diagrams, semantic webs, storyboards
 - Organizing content of paragraphs and other written compositions, including topic sentences, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences with varied sentence structure
 - Using transitional words or phrases to help create coherence in compositions
 - Using tone appropriate to the topic, purpose, and audience
9. Utilize vocabulary and spelling skills, including using homonyms, synonyms, and antonyms, in writing.
10. Use punctuation correctly in writing, including apostrophes to show possession and semicolons joining two independent clauses.
Example: The Yankees won all of their games; the Cardinals lost only two games.
 - Punctuating titles with quotation marks, underlining, and italics in writing
 - Using semicolons, conjunctive adverbs, and commas to join two independent clauses or to correct run-on sentences in writing
Example: We left late; however, we still arrived on time.
 - Using commas to set off nonessential appositives in writing
 - Identifying comma splice errors in writing
11. Apply rules governing capitalization of proper adjectives, map directions and regions of the country, seasons, titles, words showing family relationships, subjects and courses, and divided quotations.
12. Apply grammar conventions in writing with consistent verb tense; nominative, objective, and possessive pronouns; and subject-verb agreement when interrupted by a prepositional phrase.

Research and Inquiry

13. Utilize resource materials for supporting evidence in compositions.
14. Use organizing and paraphrasing in the research process.
 - Taking notes to gather and summarize information
 - Determining details through questioning

Oral and Visual Communication

15. Recognize speech forms, including dialects and idioms.
Examples: dialects—Appalachian, Gullah
idioms—“raining cats and dogs,” “in hot water”
16. Demonstrate eye contact, articulation, and appropriate voice intonation with persuasive presentations.
17. Use listening skills for remembering significant details, directions, and sequences.
 - Summarizing messages for content and purpose
 - Practicing note-taking skills to gather and summarize information
 - Paraphrasing spoken messages to summarize or clarify
 - Recognizing propaganda as an art of persuasion in evaluating content and purpose

Seventh Grade

Students in seventh grade undergo a variety of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes. As they continue to explore their identities, seventh graders expand their knowledge of reading skills, literature, and oral communication. Through this development, students acquire extended vocabulary skills through reading culturally diverse literature.

The strands of reading, literature, writing and language, research and inquiry, and oral and visual communication are integrated daily across the curriculum. Beyond the classroom, these English language arts skills are required for students to flourish in a productive society. The experiences teachers provide greatly influence students' progress toward becoming lifelong learners and appreciators of language and literature.

MINIMUM REQUIRED CONTENT

Students will:

Reading

1. Apply strategies appropriate to the type of reading material, including setting purposes for reading and making generalizations, to comprehend seventh-grade recreational reading materials.
 - Distinguishing factual from fictional materials
 - Determining sequence of events
 - Using specific context clues to determine meaning of unfamiliar words
 - Applying self-monitoring strategies for text understanding
 - Drawing conclusions to interpret unstated intent
 - Analyzing predictions, including confirming and refuting
2. Relate literary elements and devices to each other, including main idea and supporting details, climax, point of view, and imagery.
 - Determining mood
 - Recognizing use of flashback
3. Distinguish among the major genres, including poetry, short stories, novels, plays, biographies and autobiographies, and subgenres such as folktales, myths, parables, fables, and science fiction, based on their characteristics.
4. Apply strategies that include setting purposes for reading, distinguishing fact from opinion, making generalizations, and reviewing to comprehend seventh-grade informational and functional reading materials.
 - Determining sequence of events to enhance text understanding
 - Using specific context clues to determine meaning of unfamiliar words
 - Applying self-monitoring strategies for text understanding
 - Drawing conclusions to determine unstated intent
5. Recognize the use of textual elements, including main idea and supporting details, to gain information from various text formats, including graphs.

Literature

6. Analyze nonfiction, science fiction, mystery or suspense, fantasy, and adventure for distinguishing characteristics.
 - Classifying plot elements as exposition or hook, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, or resolution
7. Interpret the author's message in various literary, informational, and functional texts.

Examples: literary text—nonfiction, science fiction, suspense, fantasy, adventure
informational and functional texts—laws, directions, newspapers, advertisements, Internet sources, pamphlets

 - Comparing various types of informational and functional texts
8. Compare selections of culturally diverse literature and their characteristics.

Examples: Native American, Hispanic, African American, Indian, European, Asian, Middle Eastern

Writing and Language

9. Compose in descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive modes with a thesis sentence and introductory, supporting, and concluding paragraphs when appropriate.
 - Using transitional words and phrases for coherence
 - Composing various genres of literature by imitating an author's style, form, and purpose

Examples: poetry, short story, folktale, tall tale, nonfiction, science fiction, suspense, fantasy, adventure, contemporary realistic fiction, legend, fable, myth
 - Using figurative language when writing in various genres
10. Apply mechanics in writing, including commas to set off nouns of address and following introductory phrases and clauses.
 - Punctuating titles correctly using quotation marks, underlining, or italics

Examples: quotation marks—short stories
underlining or italics—books, magazines, newspapers
 - Using semicolons, conjunctive adverbs, and commas to join two independent clauses or to correct run-on sentences
 - Demonstrating correct sentence structure by avoiding comma splices
 - Using commas to set off nonessential clauses and appositives

11. Apply grammar conventions in writing to pronoun-antecedent agreement and to subject-verb agreement with inverted word order and with indefinite pronouns as subjects.
 - Identifying gerunds, infinitives, and participles in writing
 - Using degrees of comparison in writing

Examples: good, better, best; beautiful, more beautiful, most beautiful
 - Identifying sentence patterns in writing

Examples: subject→verb (S→V)
 subject→action verb→direct object (S→AV→DO)
 subject→action verb→indirect object→direct object
 (S→AV→IO→DO)
 subject→linking verb→predicate nominative (S→LV→PN)
 subject→linking verb→predicate adjective (S→LV→PA)
 - Using compound and complex sentences in writing

Research and Inquiry

12. Cite sources used in the research process.

Examples: author, title, page numbers, date of publication, publisher or uniform resource locator (URL)
13. Apply steps in the research process to identify a problem or issue, locate resources and information, and present findings.
 - Taking notes to gather and summarize information

Oral and Visual Communication

14. Present findings from inquiry and research using a variety of resources.

Examples: projects, brochures, display boards, speeches, multimedia presentations
15. Demonstrate listening skills, including identifying the main idea, detail, purpose, and bias in group discussions, public speeches, and media messages.

Eighth Grade

Students in Grade 8 broaden their ability to combine prior knowledge with new information. They are given frequent opportunities to enhance skills in reading, writing, discussing, and giving oral reports. Students become more proficient in revising and editing as they master grammar and usage concepts. They also continue to develop the necessary self-confidence for meeting the expectations of high school.

Students benefit when teachers in all subject areas coordinate instruction in a manner that allows them to see relationships among subject areas. This helps them become more cognizant of the need for good writing skills, not only in the area of English language arts, but also in all other subject areas. These experiences encourage students to become more adept in their communication skills.

MINIMUM REQUIRED CONTENT

Students will:

Reading

1. Apply strategies, including making inferences to determine theme, confirming or refuting predictions, and using specific context clues, to comprehend eighth-grade recreational reading materials.
 - Applying self-monitoring strategies for text understanding
 - Distinguishing fact from fiction to enhance understanding
 - Determining sequence in recreational reading materials
2. Evaluate the impact of setting, mood, and characterization on theme in specific literary selections.
 - Identifying components of plot
3. Distinguish among the subcategories of poetry, such as ballads, lyric poems, epics, haiku, and limericks, based on their characteristics.
 - Identifying rhythm and rhyme scheme
4. Apply strategies appropriate to type of reading material, including making inferences to determine bias or theme and using specific context clues, to comprehend eighth-grade informational and functional reading materials.
 - Applying self-monitoring strategies for text understanding
 - Comparing predicted with actual content in informational and functional reading materials
 - Distinguishing fact from opinion in informational reading materials
 - Confirming author's credentials
 - Determining sequence of steps, events, or information

Literature

5. Explain distinguishing characteristics of odes, ballads, epic poetry, historical documents, essays, letters to the editor, and editorials.

6. Analyze works of literature for character motivation, mood, tone, theme, similarities across texts, and literary devices.

Writing and Language

7. Compose a business letter, including heading, inside address, salutation, body, closing, and signature.
8. Write in narrative, expository, and persuasive modes with attention to descriptive elements.
Examples: descriptive elements—sensory detail, figurative language, spatial relationships
9. Apply mechanics in writing, including using quotation marks, underlining, and italics to punctuate titles and using semicolons, conjunctive adverbs, and commas to join two independent clauses or to correct run-on sentences.
 - Demonstrating correct sentence structure by avoiding comma splices in writing
 - Using commas to set off nonessential clauses and appositives in writing
10. Use prepositional phrases and compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to vary sentence structure.
Example: determining variety in sentence structure by diagramming or identifying patterns in selected sentences
 - Using gerunds, infinitives, and participles in writing
 - Recognizing active and passive voice in writing
 - Applying subject-verb agreement rules with collective nouns, nouns compound in form but singular in meaning, compound subjects joined by correlative and coordinating conjunctions, and subjects plural in form but singular in meaning
11. Write sentence patterns common to English construction.
Examples: subject→verb (S→V)
subject→action verb→direct object (S→AV→DO)
subject→action verb→indirect object→direct object
(S→AV→IO→DO)
subject→linking verb→predicate nominative (S→LV→PN)
subject→linking verb→predicate adjective (S→LV→PA)
12. Identify the correct use of degrees of comparison, adjectives and adverb forms, and subject-verb agreement with collective nouns when verb forms depend on the rest of the sentence and with compound subjects, including those joined by *or* with the second element as singular or plural.
 - Recognizing parallelism in phrases and clauses

Research and Inquiry

13. Combine all aspects of the research process to compose a report.
Examples: outline, rough draft, editing, final copy, works-cited page
 - Taking notes to gather and summarize information
 - Using paraphrasing and documentation of sources to avoid plagiarism

Oral and Visual Communication

14. Identify characteristics of spoken formal and informal language.
Examples: formal—Standard English, no slang
informal—dialect, slang