

Missoula County Public Schools English Language Arts Curriculum



Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

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Missoula County Public Schools recently adopted a new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for our middle school students. The Missoula County Public Schools K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum aligns to the Montana Common Core Standards. The standards, which are divided into broad strands: Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, and Reading Foundational Skills K-5; Writing; Speaking and Listening; and Language, reflect the essential skills necessary for life, college and career readiness and responsible citizenship in the 21st century. All students need to be skillful in English Language Arts to successfully learn in school, to become productive members of society, and to achieve their full potential through life-long learning.

The board approved the adoption of the EngageNY curriculum materials in May 2018 and we are implementing those resources in 6th - 8th-grade classrooms.

How does MCPS define “curriculum?”

The curriculum is the standards that we teach. It is the answer to the first question of our four questions within a Professional Learning Community - “What is it that we want our students to know and be able to do?” Once the standards are clearly defined, then the materials and resources we use to address the standards are aligned. This answers the second question of a Professional Learning Community - “How will we know if they know it?”

“The curriculum must provide clear guidance regarding the content to be addressed in specific courses and at specific grade levels. “ (Marzano et al., 2014, p. 69)

What is a guaranteed and viable curriculum?

- Guaranteed curriculum means every student is provided the opportunity to learn a core curriculum, which provides them with the probability of success in school.
- Viable curriculum means that the necessary time is available in the day, and protected, so students will be able to learn the guaranteed curriculum.

What are curriculum materials?

We choose to utilize common curriculum materials to promote consistency across each school, ensuring that all students are learning in an equitable educational setting. The benefit of common materials enables teachers to come together in a collaborative manner, as a Professional Learning Community, to share in best instructional and assessment practices that ensures improved outcomes for all students.

Engage NY Curriculum Materials

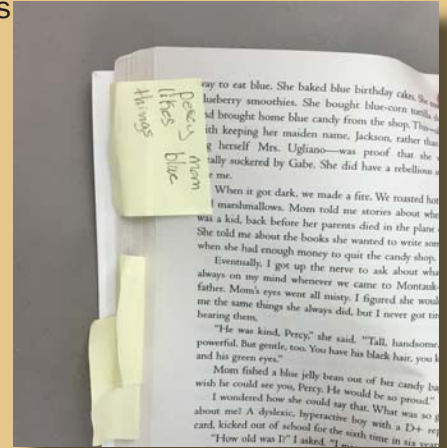
Engage NY is a set of curriculum materials selected by the District because they promote high quality reading skills through the application of engaging instructional strategies that enable all students to access learning opportunities and achieve.

Student experience in the classroom

You might have already seen your student bring home the novel they are reading in class. Students in each grade level 6th-8th will read three novels per academic year.

Your student(s) may be adding sticky notes in their texts to mark their evidence for classroom discussions.

A goal of this new curriculum is to teach our students to be stronger readers and give them the ability to read complex text independently. We focus on *close reading*, which means that we read, reread and analyze small portions of text to really determine what it means. This allows students multiple attempts to dig in to what they are reading. Throughout the year, your student will read a variety of text from short stories, poetry, newspaper articles, speeches, and other resources. In addition to this, each unit will focus on a whole novel. Here is a summary of what students will see in their ELA classrooms during middle school:



6th Grade :

- The Lightning Thief, Rick Riordan,
- Bud, Not Buddy, Christopher Paul Curtis
- “Stanford University Commencement Address”, Steve Jobs
- Frightful’s Mountain, Jean Craighead George
- “The Exterminator,” Kristen Weir

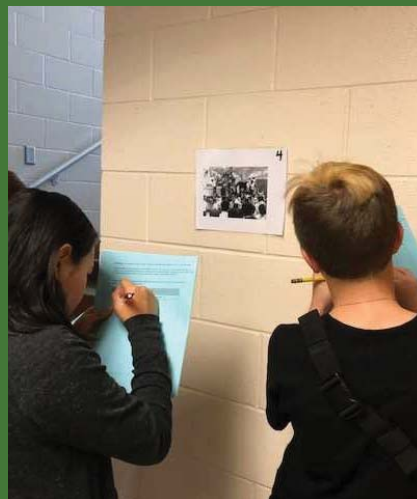
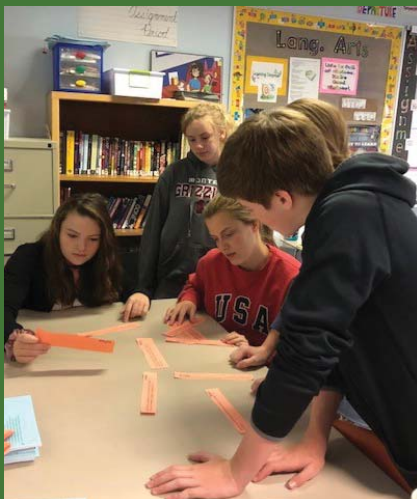
7th Grade:

- A Long Walk to Water, Linda Sue Park
- Pygmalion, George Bernard Shaw
- Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
- “Sudanese Tribes Confront Modern War”, Karl Vick

8th Grade:

- Inside Out & Back Again, Thanhha Lai
- “The Vietnam Wars,” Tod Olson
- To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee
- “Equal Rights for Women” Chisholm
- “Ain’t I a Woman?” Sojourner Truth
- Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption, Laura Hillenbrand

In class, your student will be participating in a lot of small group discussions and activities that help them connect their reading to other topics. These discussions are designed to help students build an understanding of the time period and vocabulary prior to reading key texts in the classroom.



8th graders digging into photographs of Vietnam War, and ordering sentence strips from a New York Times article about the fall of Saigon.