

The Middle Country Central School District's K-12 ELA Program

Overview

The Middle Country ELA program is fully aligned with the New York State ELA Learning Standards. Our curriculum and instruction is designed to thoroughly prepare our students for success in college and their careers by empowering and inspiring them to grow into powerful, lifelong readers, writers, researchers, listeners, and speakers.

Reading

By the time students graduate from the Middle Country School District, they will have demonstrated proficiency in closely reading, analyzing, and discussing a wide range of texts in order to develop their ability to fully understand, critique, and enjoy diverse works of both fiction and nonfiction. They will have also learned that while actively reading is an essential human activity, reading and discussing literature can also be a wonderful experience.

Writing and Research

As writers, students will be able to clearly, confidently, and creatively communicate their thoughts and ideas through numerous genres to a variety of audiences. They will be also become proficient in evaluating and utilizing sources of information to develop and present evidence-based claims that are free from plagiarism.

Listening and Speaking

Our students will know how to listen with an open mind, ask insightful questions, and voice their opinions articulately, respectfully, and persuasively.

Elementary

The Middle Country Elementary ELA program is fully aligned with the New York State ELA Learning Standards and the Columbia University Teachers College (TC) Reading and Writing Workshop.

The elementary teachers provide ELA instruction through integrated units of study, collaborative and individual work, and student-centered learning to make children active, independent learners. To support the teachers and students, the District provides a daily literacy block and utilizes expert literacy consultants from TC who provide ongoing professional development throughout the school year.

Instruction begins with Kindergarten students learning to read by making connections and identifying key details, elements, and unknown words in various types of text. In writing, students first learn to inform, narrate, and express their opinion. They also collaborate, explore a variety of digital tools to publish their writing, and they participate in basic research projects in which they answer questions and form opinions.

As students progress through the primary grades, teachers supplement the children's reading and writing instruction with word study through their utilization of the research-based Foundations and Words Their Way programs. Through these programs, the Middle Country students are engaged in the key areas of beginning reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, sight word instruction, handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

By fifth grade, the students' reading instruction focuses on building fluency and enhancing the students' ability to accurately comprehend and evaluate more complex texts. Students learn to quote text while drawing inferences, determine main ideas and themes in texts, determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words, compare the structure of multiple texts, and integrate information to synthesize ideas. Differentiated word study is also continued through the Words Their Way program. The fifth grade writing instruction enables students to produce well-developed opinion, informative, and narrative pieces that are appropriate for the intended task, purpose, and audience. Students also participate in the research and writing process, culminating in a Capstone Research Project that revolves around a self-selected topic.

Secondary

The Middle Country secondary-level ELA curriculum consists of units of study collaboratively synthesized by administrators and teachers who have closely analyzed model NYS ELA curricula. These Standards-aligned units of study incorporate the ongoing development of language skills and the writing of narrative, informational, and argumentative text as the students build their abilities in close reading, formulating evidence-based claims, conducting research, and developing evidence-based arguments. Also, because media and technology are integral to life in the twenty-first century, the students' skills in critically analyzing and producing media are developed throughout the units. Instruction needs to evolve along with the needs of our students, so our development of the ELA curriculum is ongoing – the ELA teachers and administrators continuously revise the maps as they engage in ongoing discussions about student learning and effective teaching.

Middle School

In grades 6-8, our goal is to encourage our students' love of reading, to enhance

their ability and desire to develop their vocabulary, comprehension and analytical skills, and to expose them to a wide variety of powerful fiction and nonfiction texts. Through the middle school ELA curriculum and instruction, students engage in various activities that promote deeper thinking and the establishment of connections among texts and the world, including independent reading outside of school. Our middle school ELA curriculum also immerses the students in a variety of writing experiences arising from the study of literature. This includes both creative and analytical writing. As students move through the grades, cumulative expectations regarding research, language skills, and the development of poetry, narrative, informational, and argumentative texts prepare students for the demands they will face as they progress through high school.

High School

At the high school, all students must complete four years of English and demonstrate proficiency on the NYS English Regents (Common Core) at the conclusion of eleventh grade in order to be eligible for graduation. At each grade level, students build upon the knowledge and skills they developed in elementary and middle school in order to demonstrate the proficiency and independence required for success on the Regents and in reading, writing, researching, listening, and speaking at the post-secondary level and beyond. Because we believe it is also imperative that we instill in our high school students a life-long love of literacy, we provide students an opportunity to explore and choose from a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction texts, and we offer the students numerous courses that were created with the students' needs and interests in mind. Course choices include Creative Writing, Heroic Journeys in Literature, Contemporary Issues in Literature, Greatest Hits in Literature, Literature in the Digital Age, Exploring Mythology, College English, Journalism, Public Speaking, AP Language and Composition, and AP Literature and Composition.

Online Resources:

1. New York State Next Generation ELA Standards

<http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/teachers/new-york-state-next-generation-english-language-arts-learning>

2. Free Books

<http://novelnewyork.org>

3. Literacy Websites

Tumblebooks

- <http://www.tumblebooks.com>

Raz-Kids Login (for elementary students only)

- <https://www.kidsa-z.com/main/Login>

Discovery Education English Homework Help K-12

- http://school.discoveryeducation.com/homeworkhelp/english/english_homework_help.html

ReadWriteThink Afterschool Literacy Activities and Stories

- <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/>

GoodReads – Book Recommendations and Activities

- <http://www.goodreads.com/>

Shelfari – For Book Lovers

- <http://www.shelfari.com/>