



## English Language Arts (ELA) Instruction in the Downingtown Area School District

English Language Arts instruction in the Downingtown Area School District is aligned to the PA Core Standards. This document communicates an overview of the instructional focus at each grade level from kindergarten through grade 12. Parents are encouraged to talk with the teacher to find out more about specific strategies and resources used in their child’s classroom.

English Language Arts includes the following literacy strands: Reading Foundations (Book Handling, Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency), Reading Informational Text, Reading Literature, Writing, Speaking and Listening.

Prekindergarten skills are identified to create an awareness for parents of incoming kindergarten students of the pre-requisite skills necessary for success in the Downingtown’s kindergarten program.

<p><b><i>Prekindergarten</i></b></p> <p><i>Note: The Downingtown Area School District does not offer a pre-kindergarten program.</i></p>	<p>Prekindergarten students begin the writing process by illustrating and/or telling about a topic. They identify and/or create illustrations that depict story detail. They write symbols, words, or simple phrases that communicate an idea to make a connection between drawing and dictation.</p> <p>Preschoolers write using letter-like forms moving into conventional print. They listen and respond in clear simple sentences to both peer and adult conversations. Students collaborate by sharing, contributing, and asking questions during class discussions.</p> <p>Children this age use both verbal and nonverbal language to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas to be understood by others.</p>
<p><b><i>Kindergarten</i></b></p>	<p>Students in kindergarten transition from oral to written literacy. They demonstrate their understanding of the features of print as they learn to track print and develop a sense of letters, words, and sentences. Students develop their phonological awareness skills through activities such as rhyming, counting syllables, and isolating beginning sounds.</p> <p>Students connect letters with their corresponding sounds as well as develop other grade level phonics skills. They develop comprehension strategies that enable them to read grade-level texts, including both storybooks and informational texts, with purpose and understanding. Students identify characters, setting, and major events in stories as well as retell details in informational books.</p> <p>Students write sentences and stories using their letter sound knowledge to spell phonetically. As writers, they focus their writing on one specific topic, use descriptive words and create illustrations rich with details. Students write stories in which they describe experiences and events or form an opinion as they choose between two topics. They use grade appropriate conventions in their writing such as capital letters and end punctuation.</p> <p>Kindergarten students participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults in small and larger groups, sharing stories, familiar experiences, and interests. Students ask and answer questions in order to seek help, gain information, or clarify something that is not understood.</p>



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### *Grade 1*

In first grade, students move toward independence as readers. They learn and apply more advanced phonological and phonics skills as they fluently read a variety of grade-level appropriate literary and informational texts. As they engage with texts, they expand their knowledge and use of vocabulary. They demonstrate their understanding of the details and central message in texts through activities such as retelling literature in sequence, explaining similarities and differences between texts, and asking or answering questions.

First grade students also write for a variety of purposes. They write to inform, to support an opinion, and to describe an experience. As they write, they organize their content, include a sense of closure, and use a variety of words and phrases. They master grade level conventions of language and use complete sentences when writing and speaking.

First grade students also listen critically and pose clarifying questions.



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### *Grade 2*

In second grade, students begin to read with greater accuracy and fluency. They conduct more sophisticated word studies and use their decoding skills and expanding sight word bank to read longer, more complex texts - including fables and folktales from diverse cultures. Students recount the stories they read, determining the central message, lesson, or moral and describe how characters respond to major events and challenges. As students read grade level text, they cite textual evidence to support the author's purpose. They acquire and use grade-appropriate general academic and domain specific vocabulary.

Students in second grade deepen written and verbal communication skills. In addition to informational and narrative writing, students create pieces that state their opinions supported with reasons, using linking words to connect ideas and providing a concluding statement or section. Written text becomes more readable throughout second grade as students use grade – appropriate grammar and conventions including plural and proper nouns, prefixes, and suffixes.

Students engage in collaborative, respectful discussions about topics and texts. They use technology to record, present, and embellish both written and verbal communication using audio recordings, drawings, or visual displays and digital publishing tools.



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### *Grade 3*

In third grade, students select and combine skills to read fluently with meaning and purpose. They apply comprehension and vocabulary strategies to informational text and a wider variety of literary genres including poetry. Students demonstrate comprehension by participating in discussions, writing responses, and using key details and evidence from text to support their thinking. They explore author point of view and also begin to infer meaning from texts. They read for pleasure and choose books based on personal preference, topic, or author.

Students are writing longer texts, especially narratives. They embed their ideas in time and place and develop characters through detail and dialogue. Students organize around a central idea and elaborate using complete sentences. Their writing is often divided into sections through paragraphing or book parts (e.g., table of contents, chapters) and follows logical sequencing.

Information gathering as part of the planning process is common, and students are becoming more selective about vocabulary, especially when writing informational texts. They conduct short research using a variety of print and digital sources. They listen to other's writing, offer feedback, and begin to consider suggestions from others about their own writing.



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### *Grade 4*

In fourth grade, students read skillfully with meaning and purpose using appropriate comprehension and vocabulary strategies. They examine multiple points of view and the structural elements of text. Emphasis is on drawing evidence from text as they read, discuss, reflect, and respond to informational text and a wide variety of literary genres with an inclusion of texts from other cultures. They explore the theme of texts and begin to move from integrating information from one text to several texts. Students read for pleasure and continue to choose books based on personal preference, topic, theme, or author.

Students write for a range of purposes, including describing, telling a story, and explaining. They produce writing that goes beyond formulaic compositions to more self-directed pieces that include domain-specific vocabulary, precise language, and using transition words to convey meaning. Because they are aware of the interdependence of the topic, audience, purpose, and form, they select and sometimes adapt basic forms to meet specific requirements. Their understanding and use of figurative language introduces imagery to their writing. Informational writing reflects understanding of specific purpose, often requiring gathering, paraphrasing, and synthesizing facts and details from a number of resources to express and justify an opinion. There is an increased use of technology, including the internet. Students are more aware of the conventions of writing as they reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and strive to improve.



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### *Grade 5*

In fifth grade, students broaden and deepen their understanding of informational and literary text through comparing and contrasting. Students reflect on their skills and adjust their comprehension and vocabulary strategies to become better readers. They use textual evidence and quote accurately to support their analyses and interpretations. Using evidence from multiple texts, students discuss, reflect, and respond to a wide variety of literary genres and informational text. Students read for pleasure, choosing books based on personal preference, topic, genre, theme, or author.

Students develop a strong personal voice in their writing beginning in fifth grade. This is demonstrated by the way they sometimes inject humor into their narratives and support their opinions with credible reasons. Students use precise, specialized vocabulary appropriately in content-area writing. Students develop their writing craft with an emphasis on pacing and an awareness of style. They experiment with sentence length and complex sentence structures and vary leads and endings. Students are able to summarize and synthesize important works to include in their compositions.



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### *Grade 6*

In sixth grade, students read grade-appropriate, complex literature and informational text and cite textual evidence to support analyses. They examine how authors use reasons to make their points and support arguments with evidence, separating unsupported ideas from those backed by evidence. Students analyze both the structure and content of complex, grade-appropriate texts, determining how sentences and paragraphs within texts influence and contribute to the unfolding of a plot and the development and elaboration of events or ideas. Students share their findings in class discussions, practicing how logically to sequence ideas and highlight the themes and key details they find most persuasive. Students' vocabularies expand as they become more attuned to using context, knowledge of Greek and Latin roots and affixes, and word analysis to determine the meaning of academic words.

Students are increasingly challenged to sharpen their ability to write and speak with more clarity and coherence, providing clear reasons and relevant evidence. Students learn how writers try to influence readers while discovering how they can do the same in their own prose. They know how to answer questions through writing and can use rewriting opportunities to refine their understanding of a text or topic. They also take a critical stance toward sources and apply criteria for identifying reliable information as opposed to mere conjecture.



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<p><i>Grade 7</i></p>	<p>In seventh grade, students demonstrate their ability to read challenging complex texts closely and cite multiple examples of specific evidence to support their claims. They are able to recognize the interplay between setting, plot, and characters and provide an objective summary of a text apart from their own reaction to it. They are adept at stepping back to comparing and contrasting different interpretations of a topic, identifying how authors shape their presentation of key information and choose to highlight certain facts over others. Seventh grade students trace how an argument develops within a text and assess the validity of the evidence. They make their reasoning clear to their listeners and readers and constructively evaluate others' use of evidence while offering several sources to back up their own claims. The use of vocabulary has developed to the point where they distinguish between denotative and connotative meaning and analyze the effect of specific word choice on tone.</p> <p>As growing writers, students cite several sources of specific, relevant evidence when supporting their own point of view about texts and topics. Their writing is more structured, with clear introductions and conclusions as well as useful transitions to create cohesion and clarify relationships among ideas. In their writing, they acknowledge the other side of a debate or an alternative perspective while avoiding any trace of plagiarism.</p>
<p><i>Grade 8</i></p>	<p>In eighth grade, students grapple with high-quality, complex, nonfiction texts and great works of literature. The focus of informational texts shifts from narrative to expository. Students know how to cite textual evidence supporting an analysis or critique. Students know how to question an author's assumptions and assess the accuracy of the claims. Eighth grade students read closely and find evidence to use in their own writing; they analyze two or more texts that provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify whether the disagreement is over facts or interpretation. They analyze how point of view can be manipulated to create specific effects such as dramatic irony and investigate how particular passages within a text connect to one another to advance the plot, reveal a character, or highlight an idea.</p> <p>Students have developed a strong vocabulary of academic words, which they use to speak and write with more precision. Their writing continues to grow focusing on organizing ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; choosing relevant facts well; and using varied transitions to clarify or show the relationships among elements.</p>





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<p><i>Grade 9</i></p>	<p>In ninth grade, students focus on analysis of reading and analytical writing grounded in evidence from text. Focusing on deciphering perceptions of truth and reality, they determine and evaluate an author’s ideas, argument, specific claims, and counterclaims. Students examine reasoning, both others' and their own, for validity and relevant evidence. They also identify fallacious reasoning and false statements.</p> <p>Ninth graders analyze an author’s use of rhetoric to advance a point of view or purpose. Students analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or arguments, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, as well as the connections made between them. Students acquire and use with independence academic and domain specific words at the college and career readiness level.</p>
<p><i>Grade 10</i></p>	<p>In tenth grade, students analyze various forms of literature, including fiction, non-fiction and other mediums, on a variety of levels including theme development, author’s assumptions and beliefs, complex development, point of view and its impact on meaning and text structure and rhetoric, while using textual evidence and their own life experiences.</p> <p>In addition, students create their own writing samples using academic vocabulary, sufficient facts, concrete details, quotations and other information with an awareness of projected audience knowledge. They make important connections and distinctions, using varied transitions to link major sections of the text and provide description and evidence in their pieces of writing to create a cohesive and coherent whole in all writing.</p> <p>Students also initiate and engage in meaningful collaborative discussion on grade-level topics heightened by their ability to reason, provide evidence, and evaluate the views of others while exploring their own beliefs and assumptions.</p>



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<p><i>Grade 11</i></p>	<p>In eleventh grade, students analyze and evaluate perspective in connection to purpose, audience, and task (biases). They cite strong, thorough textual evidence based on and related to the author’s implicit and explicit assumptions and beliefs. Emphasis is placed on the analysis of the interaction between and development of themes or ideas over the course of a text or multiple texts.</p> <p>Students analyze and evaluate the impact of an author’s rhetorical choices (i.e., point of view, purpose, style) on their writing and reasoning, including claims and counterclaims, as well as precise language such as metaphor, simile, and analogy. They analyze seminal and foundational U.S. and world texts based on reasoning and rhetoric, as well as works of literature that reflect a variety of genres and major periods.</p> <p>Finally, students conduct sustained research projects and/or make strategic use of digital media to answer a question by evaluating, organizing and integrating multiple sources and complex ideas to make informed decisions on how the specifics relate to the whole.</p>
<p><i>Grade 12</i></p>	<p>In twelfth grade, students move towards academic independence and college-and-career readiness. Students grapple with demanding texts by integrating previously learned skills to analyze and evaluate the writer’s premise, purpose, and argument in both informational and literary text. Students conduct sustained research and engage in sharp distinctive writing while making informed decisions, solving problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of sources, and noting discrepancies among the resources. Using previously learned competencies, students master skills such as asking their own questions, solving their own problems, and leading their own class discussions.</p> <p>Finally, students continue to develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening to master purposeful and independent expression.</p>