Organization of the 6-8 Notebook

Overview
- MMSD Educational Framework
  - Characteristics of Middle School Learner
  - Social Construction of Knowledge
  - Zone of Proximal Development
  - Scaffolding
  - Gradual Release of Responsibility
  - Teaching and Learning Cycle
  - Organizing for Instruction

Reading
- Standards
  - Reading Assessment
    - Metacognitive Process
      - Modeled, Shared, Guided, Independent
        - Traits of a Reader
          - Literary Appreciation and Genre Study
            - Fluency
              - Reading across the Curriculum
                - Struggling Adolescent Readers

Writing
- Standards
  - Writing Assessment
    - Writing Process
      - Modeled, Shared, Guided, Independent
        - 6 + 1 Traits®
          - Genre Study
            - Writer’s Craft
              - Struggling Adolescent Writers

Language & Communication
- Standards
  - Oral Communication
    - Accountable Talk SM
      - Language Study
        - Grammar
          - Spelling
            - Vocabulary

Inquiry & Research
- Standards
  - Inquiry Process
    - Research Steps

6-8 Literacy Notebook    Madison Metropolitan School District    ©2005
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Overview

MMSD Educational Framework ................................................................. 1  
Characteristics of the Middle School Learner ....................................... 3  
Learning Theory: Social Construction of Knowledge ............................... 4  
  Zone of Proximal Development .......................................................... 5  
  Scaffolding Instruction ..................................................................... 6  
  Gradual Release of Responsibility ..................................................... 7  
  Teaching and Learning Cycle .............................................................. 8  
  Organizing for Instruction ................................................................. 9  

## Reading

Standards .................................................................................................. 13  
How Do I Assess My Student’s Reading? ............................................. 16  
  Why assess the middle school reader? ................................................. 16  
  What is the MMSD assessment philosophy? ...................................... 16  
  What are the benefits of reading assessment? .................................... 16  
  What are our middle school reading assessments? ............................ 17  
  Observation Checklist ...................................................................... 19  
  Traits of a Reader Rubric ................................................................. 21  
How Do I Teach Reading? ................................................................. 23  
  Establish a Reading Culture .............................................................. 23  
  Teach Reading as a Metacognitive Process ....................................... 25  
  Characteristics of Struggling and Strong Readers ............................. 25  
What Do I Teach? ................................................................................ 27  
  Comprehension: Traits of a Reader .................................................. 27  
  Literary Appreciation and Genre Study .......................................... 35  
  Fluency ............................................................................................. 37  
  Oral Reading Fluency Rubric ............................................................ 38  
  Reading across the Curriculum ....................................................... 39  
How Do I Create Independent Readers? ........................................... 41  
  Read Aloud and Think Aloud ............................................................ 42  
  Shared Reading ................................................................................. 44  
  Guided Reading ............................................................................... 46  
  Independent Reading ..................................................................... 48  
How Do I Help My Struggling Adolescent Readers? ......................... 49  

## Writing

Standards ............................................................................................... 51  
How Do I Assess My Student’s Writing? ............................................. 53  
  Why assess the middle school writer? ................................................. 53  
  What is the MMSD assessment philosophy? ...................................... 53  
  What are the benefits of writing assessment? .................................... 53
Our mission as middle school teachers is to teach all students learning strategies that will help them realize their potential and become lifelong, independent learners. By middle school, students’ reading and writing abilities range from significantly below to significantly above grade level. Despite this fact, students at all developmental levels need to learn key strategies to master both the content and learning processes integral to the language arts.

The Wisconsin Model Academic Standards in English/Language Arts offer a foundation for our instruction. Drawing upon the standards, we focus instruction in a developmental sequence in:

- Reading and Literature
- Writing
- Language and Communication
- Inquiry and Research

This 6-8 Literacy Notebook offers an instructional vision for middle school teachers that reflects both standards and current research. Melding our content standards with best practices in literacy instruction creates a rigorous, high-quality middle school language arts program. Our district’s continuing initiative with 6 + 1 Traits® of writing and our current emphasis on the Traits of a Reader provide instructional frameworks that promote common language which enhances the literacy development of middle school learners. This unified K-12 approach to literacy development offers a vehicle to extend student gains in reading and writing at the elementary level into middle school.

In addition, the need for a common language across all curricular areas cannot be overemphasized. All middle school teachers share the responsibility for helping students become competent readers and writers in their own subject areas. The concept of ideas in writing and the importance of determining the essence of a text in reading, for instance, are equally important in language arts, science, social studies, math, and the humanities.

This notebook is a true collaboration of individuals who investigated the research, read extensively, shared teaching expertise, and wove together their learning and experiences to create a vision for middle school language arts instruction.

**Middle School Task Force Members:**


**Language Arts Facilitators:**

Doug Buehl, Jan Mahaffey, Sharyn Stumpf and Mary Watson Peterson
Overview
The Madison Metropolitan School District's Educational Framework (Figure 1) is foundational to all that follows in this 6-8 Literacy Notebook. When we meet our middle school students, we must initially establish relationships with them to create the conditions that will allow them to realize academic achievement. The framework’s focus on engagement and relationships supports psychologist Abraham Maslow’s theory of relationality as a critical component of the learning process. His theory is that people must have essential needs, such as a sense of love-belongingness, reasonably met in order to free them for higher-level esteem needs such as achievement, competence and independence.
The equal emphasis in the MMSD framework on engagement, relationships and learning impacts all students through core practices. Core practices are the cornerstone of our district’s comprehensive system of student supports designed to meet our goal: to assure that every student has the knowledge and skills necessary for academic achievement and a meaningful life. The equal emphasis on engagement, relationships and learning begins for each student with the core practices offered daily in the language arts classroom. The core practices embody the framework’s objectives to:

- use assessment data to inform decisions.
- scaffold interventions for each student.
- use consistent system-wide interventions for students who are struggling.
- act on the understanding that each student may see the world differently from the adults in the school.
- work collaboratively to provide equitable, meaningful and effective learning environments for all students.
- establish behavior response systems that promote positive change and re-engagement.
- focus professional development on research-based best practices.

**Characteristics of the Middle School Learner**

Early adolescence is a time of profound change: rapidly developing bodies, sometimes chaotic emotions, and shifting friendships and peer relationships. These changes are dramatic as any middle school teacher can attest. A twelve year old entering sixth grade differs significantly from the maturing adolescent leaving eighth grade. Following are important characteristics of the middle school learner that should be factored into our instructional decision making in language arts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Learner</th>
<th>Meeting Instructional Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Characteristics</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- Needs meaningful relationships with adults and peers  
- Increasingly values peer relationships  
- Seeks social validation by peers  
- Vacillates between wanting to fit in and exploring individuality  
- Desires periods of solitude  
- Is sensitive to gender differences and issues  
- Develops awareness of cultural diversity  |
| **Emotional Characteristics** |  
- Experiences evolving self image  
- Alternates between comfort and discomfort with “this new person”  
- Faces the challenge of taking risks  
- Seeks autonomy and control over personal life and learning  
- Requires safety and respect through turbulent times  
- Can be both fickle and loyal  
- Displays egocentric attitude  
- Needs physical movement within classroom routines  |
| **Cognitive Characteristics** |  
- Acquires gradually increasing attention span  
- Demonstrates concrete to abstract thinking  
- Is increasingly able to extend beyond the literal to higher-order thinking  
- Thinks about what is possible, speculates and imagines  
- Needs to understand consequences of behavior  
- Is capable of thinking about thinking (metacognition)  
- Views others and issues with multiple perspectives  
- Undergoes a period of rapid brain growth which impacts decision making and problem solving  
- Shows expanding curiosity and interests  
- Displays sensitivity and vulnerability to media images  
- Needs to develop a critical lens for evaluation of text and visual materials  |
|  |  
- Plan a challenging, rigorous standards-based curriculum with high expectations for all students  
- Build relationships and create a respectful and safe classroom environment which honors each student  
- Use humor  
- Accommodate active (and sometimes awkward) bodies  
- Offer choices:  
  - Physical classroom environments  
  - Relevant curriculum topics, including popular culture  
  - Curricular responses to learning  
  - Interactions (whole class, small groups, flexible grouping, independent work)  |
|  |  
- Provide opportunities for students to develop sensitivity toward others’ beliefs and interpretations  
- Design opportunities for individual goal setting and self assessment  
- Differentiate activities and materials  
- Teach metacognitive strategies  
- Offer inquiry-based learning  
- Model socially appropriate behaviors, values, lifelong learning skills and the love of reading and writing  
- Provide time for reflection about learning  
- Model work behavior for group and independent work  
- Teach and model problem-solving skills and the process for making responsible choices  
- Implement the gradual release of responsibility framework for reading and writing: modeled, shared, guided and independent  
- Read aloud often to students  
- Routinely plan for independent reading and writing time  
- Offer students opportunities to clarify and develop strong personal values through relevant adolescent curriculum  
- Use high-interest, culturally diverse materials which represent a range of reading levels and variety of media  
- Emphasize learning that is meaningful and explores real-life connections  
- Integrate opportunities for service learning  
- Offer additional instruction for struggling readers and writers  
- Take advantage of opportunities for individual conferencing and check-ins  
- Develop critical literacy, e.g. media literacy, Web site evaluation, authors’ perspectives in text  
- Collaborate with colleagues to develop connections across curriculum subjects and grade levels  |
Learning Theory

The theoretical foundation for literacy instruction within the Madison Metropolitan School District rests in the cognitive development work of Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky’s theory emphasizes the learner as an active participant and constructor of knowledge. Vygotsky’s social construction of knowledge moves the student out of the traditional role of passive recipient into the role of active participant. As a collaborative participant, the teacher provides students with opportunities for interactions with more expert peers and adults. Through careful observations of students engaged in learning tasks, teachers create learning opportunities so that teaching can occur in the zone of proximal development with scaffolding of instruction matched to the needs of the learner.

Social Construction of Knowledge

When teachers value the social construction of knowledge, they hold high expectations for every student and design classroom structures accordingly. For example, they view

- students as thinkers with emerging theories about the world
- teachers and students as co-creators of knowledge
- students’ understandings as transformative because of interactions with the text and one another

Our pedagogy aligns with the above philosophy by emphasizing cooperative group work, honoring students’ questions, seeking students’ points of view and assessing current perceptions and skill levels to inform future instruction.

In addition, a belief in the social construction of knowledge assumes that students actively participate in the academic discourse. The term discourse refers to a specific kind of talk we engage in with an individual or a particular group of people plus a set of common experiences and behaviors. Specifically, we may talk casually with our families (one discourse community), but we may talk using a highly specialized vocabulary in our language arts classes (a second discourse community). Examples of academic discourse include, “The meter in the first stanza is iambic pentameter. This poet uses a lot of onomatopoeia and foreshadowing.” Our students need many opportunities to write, hear, read, and speak the language of our discourse so that they become not just spectators, but true participants in confidently using the language of our discipline. Our goal is to foster students becoming “insiders” who can confidently “talk the talk” in each of their content areas.

Another facet of using academic discourse is for students to become facile in talking, not just about the course content, but about how to think in order to comprehend the course content. Metacognition is being consciously aware of our own thinking processes. In modeling metacognition for students, teachers foster deeper understanding of the text and offer a window into the inner conversation a reader has with the text. Engaging in this metacognitive process moves students from depending on the teacher to independent thinking, which allows students to apply the strategies and their knowledge in new contexts.
**Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky defines zone of proximal development (ZPD) as the gap between what a student is currently able to do independently and what that student could achieve with the assistance of a more capable adult or peer (Figure 2). For example, when a student performs a task easily, that student is independently practicing a known skill. When a student needs support from a more capable adult or peer to successfully perform a task, this student is operating within the zone of proximal development. More specifically, Vygotsky explains learning in two ways:

- independent performance – what a student knows and could learn alone
- assisted performance — what a student could understand or learn with assistance

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**ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT**

LEV VYGOTSKY

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**Actual Development**

- What the student can do today without support

**Assisted Development (ZPD)**

- What the student can do today with support

**Future Development**

- What the student cannot do today even with support

---

Figure 2
Scaffolding Instruction

Vygotsky’s assisted performance lies at the heart of scaffolding instruction. Initially, teachers observe students to analyze their strengths and determine partial understandings. Then teachers plan instruction to guide students from partial understanding into deeper understanding. The teacher scaffolds students’ learning through modeling, dialogue and interaction. Scaffolds are temporary supports that teachers create to help students learn a new concept or task. As students demonstrate growing understanding, the teacher gradually removes the scaffolds, and students assume more independent control of that concept or task.

Scaffolding instruction has several components (Figure 3):

For example, during teacher-regulated tasks, a teacher models developing questions on a piece of text. Next, the teacher and students together develop questions through supportive joint practice. Then students collaborate with one another to raise questions. Finally, the students use the strategy of developing questions on independent reading tasks, in other words, self-regulated tasks.

At the middle school level, just as in the elementary grades, instruction is organized in a scaffolded approach. The teacher models the acts of reading and writing and explicitly shares the thinking and choices made in the process. Then, in guided reading and writing, the teacher assists students, gradually releasing responsibility for learning to the students. Finally, independent reading and writing follow as the teacher provides opportunities for the students to apply new learning on their own. The scaffolding of instruction is, however, seldom strictly linear. Teachers need to constantly observe and assess students’ learning. Specifically, teachers may move from modeled reading to guided practice and notice that many students lack understanding of the new learning. Therefore, the teacher returns to modeling to provide added support. The scaffolding process is often recursive.

Gradual Release of Responsibility

The gradual release of responsibility model is based on the work of Pearson and Gallagher. This process focuses on teaching students strategies for thinking and comprehending rather than teaching skills in isolation. This model (Figure 4) describes how, in assisted performance, the teacher provides strong support while students acquire new knowledge and strategies. The teacher then gradually releases to students the responsibility for learning as they become more competent. Throughout this process, teachers continuously assess students' progress in order to plan the level of support students need next. Wilhelm illustrates the gradual release model (Figure 5) by articulating how the process moves from teacher-directed to student-directed learning. In the gradual release model, the ultimate goal is for students to demonstrate independence in learning.

Figure 4

Figure 5


Teachers understand students best by studying what students know. Therefore, the teaching and learning cycle begins with assessment (Figure 6). This cycle underscores that analyzing students’ work leads to deciding what to teach them. Very simply, assessment drives instruction.

Teachers use ongoing assessments, both formal and informal, to evaluate students’ strengths and needs. These assessments may include standardized tests, analysis of student responses, writing samples, and informal reading inventories. After evaluating assessment information, the teacher plans lessons that will meet the students’ learning needs. While teaching, teachers continuously assess students’ understanding in order to evaluate their learning. Thus, the teaching and learning cycle is recursive.

## Organizing for Instruction

### A Typical Balanced Literacy Week (90-Minute Block)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Read Aloud and Accountable Talk (5-15 minutes)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Independent Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word of the day</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fluent reading of a variety of texts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>Here and now</strong></td>
<td><strong>Guided practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Critical thinking and Accountable Talk</strong></td>
<td><strong>Direct instruction for strategic reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Academic journals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Language collection</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questioning strategies</strong></td>
<td><strong>Independent Reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Text-to-text, Text-to-self, Text-to-world connections</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent literacy Exploration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td><strong>Independent literacy Exploration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mini-mysteries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art and literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Literature Thinking</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mini-mysteries</strong></td>
<td><strong>Word Games</strong></td>
<td><strong>Creative dramatics</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Riddles/limericks</strong></td>
<td><strong>Storytelling</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Word Games</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Videos/recordings</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Speakers</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reader’s theater</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Independent literacy Exploration** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | **Independent literacy Exploration** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | **Independent literacy Exploration** |
| | **Collaborative writing** | **Art and literacy** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | |
| | **Language experience activity** | **Creative dramatics** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | |
| | **Usage mini-lessons** | **Storytelling** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | |
| | **Guided writing** | **Videos/recordings** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | |
| | **Extended writing** | **Speakers** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | |
| | **Fabulous phrases and scintillating sentences** | **Reader’s theater** | **Put the Art in Language Arts** | |

| 10 minutes | **Exit slips** | **Sharing** | **Read-alouds** | **Review** | 10 minutes |

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<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read-Aloud</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Reading</strong></td>
<td>□ Here and now</td>
<td>□ Fluent reading of a variety of texts</td>
<td>□ Direct instruction</td>
<td>□ Shared writing</td>
<td>□ Guided reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Language collection</td>
<td>□ Text-to-text, Text-to-self, Text-to-world connections</td>
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<td>□ Conferencing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Guided practice</td>
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<td>□ Literature circles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Critical thinking</td>
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<td>□ Plays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Accountable TalkSM</td>
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<td>□ Research</td>
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<td>□ Word of the day</td>
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<td>□ Books on tape</td>
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<td>□ Academic journals</td>
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<td>□ Computer programs</td>
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<td>□ Academic journals</td>
<td>□ Reading logs</td>
<td>□ End-of-week check-in</td>
<td>□ Continuous assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Word of the day</td>
<td>□ Literary letters</td>
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<td>□ Dialogue journals</td>
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<td><strong>Independent Reading</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Writing Workshop</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Shared writing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing</strong></td>
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**Sample 45-Minute Schedule for Five Literacy Class Sessions**

*Since it takes students five minutes to settle down and organize materials, I’ve scheduled only 40 minutes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher read-aloud (5 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-lesson (15 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student-led book-discussion groups meet; teacher works with one group (15 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Teacher read-aloud (5 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-lesson and whole-class practice (15 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent and/or group choice activity; teacher meets with one group (15 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teacher read-aloud (5 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-lesson (10 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student-led book-discussion groups meet; teacher works with one group (20 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teacher read-aloud (10 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent and/or group choice activity; teacher meets with one group (25 min.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Teacher read-aloud (5 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mini-lesson and whole class practice (20 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student record keeping (10 min.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both teacher and students must be highly organized to complete this schedule. Groups receive teacher support three times every ten days since reading workshop alternates with writing workshop. These short periods may heighten teacher anxiety and students’ frustrations as everyone tries to stay on the rigid time schedule.

Sample 90-Minute Schedule

Literacy Block

Blocks alternate, three days one week and two days the second week. Three days are for reading workshop, two for writing. Then the blocks switch to three days for writing and two for reading. Eighty-five minutes of time has been scheduled, allowing five minutes for students to get ready.

1
- Teacher read-aloud (10 min.)
- Whole-class gathering to review schedule (5-10 min.)
- Mini-lesson (15-20 min.)
- Student-led book-discussion groups meet; teacher works with two groups (30 min.)
- Independent choice activity; teacher confers with students (20 min.)
- Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)

2
- Teacher read-aloud (10 min.)
- Whole-class gathering to review schedule (5-10 min.)
- Mini-lesson and practice (30 min.)
- Groups and/or independent work; teacher works with two groups (30 min.)
- Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)

3
- Teacher read-aloud (10 min.)
- Whole-class gathering to review schedule (5-10 min.)
- Mini-lesson (15-20 min.)
- Vocabulary-building and word study (15 min.)
- Groups and/or independent work; teacher works with two groups (30 min.)
- Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)

4
- Teacher read-aloud (10 min.)
- Whole-class gathering to review schedule (5-10 min.)
- Independent choice activity; teacher works with two groups (30 min.)
- Record keeping or portfolio work or conferences (20 min.)
- Vocabulary-building and word study (15 min.)
- Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)

5
- Teacher read-aloud (10 min.)
- Whole-class gathering to review schedule (5-10 min.)
- Mini-lesson (15-20 min.)
- Vocabulary-building and word study (15 min.)
- Student-led book-discussion groups meet; teacher works with two groups (30 min.)
- Homework assigned, closing (5 min.)

Both teacher and students must be highly organized to complete this schedule. Groups receive teacher support three times every ten days since reading workshop alternates with writing workshop. These short periods may heighten teacher anxiety and students’ frustrations as everyone tries to stay on the rigid time schedule.
Reading
READING

STANDARDS

WISCONSIN CONTENT STANDARD:
Students in Wisconsin will read and respond to a wide range of writing to build an understanding of written materials, of themselves, and of others.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: By the end of grade Eight, students will:

Use effective reading strategies to achieve their purposes in reading.

- Use knowledge of sentence and word structure, word origins, visual images, and context clues to understand unfamiliar words and clarify passages of text
- Use knowledge of the visual features of texts, such as headings and bold face print, and structures of texts, such as chronology and cause-and-effect, as aids to comprehension
- Establish purposeful reading and writing habits by using texts to find information, gain understanding of diverse viewpoints, make decisions, and enjoy the experience of reading
- Select, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, and evaluate, orally and in writing, passages of texts chosen for specific purposes

Read, interpret, and critically analyze literature.

- Identify the defining features and structure of literary texts, such as conflict, representation of character, and point of view
- Analyze the effect of characters, plot, setting, language, topic, style, purpose, and point of view on the overall impact of literature
- Draw on a broad base of knowledge about the genres of literature, such as the structure and conventions of essays, epics, fables, myths, plays, poems, short stories, and novels, when interpreting the meaning of a literary work
- Develop criteria to evaluate literary merit and explain critical opinions about a text, either informally in conversation or formally in a well-organized speech or essay

Read and discuss literary and nonliterary texts in order to understand human experience.

- Provide interpretive responses, orally and in writing, to literary and nonliterary texts representing the diversity of American cultural heritage and cultures of the world
- Identify common historical, social, and cultural themes and issues in literary works and selected passages
- Draw on a broad base of knowledge about the themes, ideas, and insights found in classical literature while reading, interpreting, and reflecting on contemporary texts
- Evaluate the themes and main ideas of a work considering its audience and purpose

Read to acquire information.

- Interpret and use technical resources such as charts, tables, travel schedules, timelines, and manuals
- Compare, contrast, and evaluate the relative accuracy and usefulness of information from different sources
- Identify and explain information, main ideas, and organization found in a variety of informational passages
- Distinguish between the facts found in documents, narratives, charts, maps, tables and other sources and the generalizations and interpretations that are drawn from them
MMSD Grade Level Performance Standards: The student will

Grade 6

Read and learn the meanings of unfamiliar words:

- use knowledge of root words and word origins
- use word-reference materials
- use context clues to infer meaning

Comprehend text:

- determine specific purpose for reading
- activate prior knowledge to understand new material
- generate questions to be answered
- make, confirm, or revise predictions and provide support for response
- draw conclusions and make inferences based on explicit and implied information
- compare and contrast information about one topic contained in different selections
- summarize ideas

Read fiction (realistic, fantasy, historical) and nonfiction (expository and argumentative):

- use knowledge of literary forms to aid comprehension and predict outcomes
- identify author's purpose and audience
- describe how author's style elicits emotional response
- compare and contrast authors' styles
- explain how character and plot development are used in a selection to support a central conflict or story line
- understand grade appropriate literature and information material
- read poetry
  - describe the visual images created by language
  - describe how word choice, speaker, and imagery elicit a response from the reader
  - compare and contrast plot and character development in narrative poems

Grade 7

Read and learn the meaning of unfamiliar words:

- use analogies, idioms, similes, and metaphors to extend understandings of word meanings
- explore multiple meanings of words
- use context clues to infer meaning

Read and understand information from varied sources:

- compare/contrast personal experience with character's role, situation, or emotion
- discuss relevance of own experience with author's message
- use knowledge of text structures to aid comprehension
- draw conclusions and provide support from text
- distinguish fact from opinion in newspapers, magazines, and other print media
- summarize information
- adjust reading rate according to purpose
- ask a variety of questions to self/others

Read fiction and nonfiction:

- describe setting, plot structure, and theme or conflict
- analyze relationship among author's style, literary form, and intended impact on reader
- describe connections among historical and cultural influences and literary selections
- describe how word choice and language structure convey an author's viewpoint in newspaper, magazine articles, and critical reviews
• compare/contrast character and plot development in short stories and longer fiction selections
• read poetry
  ✓ describe the impact of specific word choices, such as jargon, dialect, multiple meanings, invented words, concrete or abstract terms, and sensory or figurative language
  ✓ explain how sentence structure, line length, and punctuation convey mood or meaning of a poem
  ✓ describe how rhythm contributes to the purpose or theme of a poem
  ✓ compare and contrast the rhythm of poems with similar and dissimilar themes

Grade 8

Read and learn the meanings of unfamiliar words:
• apply knowledge of word origins, derivations, idioms and use analogies, metaphors, and similes to extend vocabulary development
• use context clues to infer meaning

Comprehend what is read from a variety of sources:
• compare/contrast prior knowledge and personal experiences with author’s information/message
• draw on prior knowledge and knowledge of text structure to understand selections
• set purposes and goals in understanding the text, determining its complexity and establishing a rate for reading
• analyze details for relevance and accuracy
• recognize and respond to text complexity (e.g., ambiguity and conflicting messages in text)
• summarize information in a brief, concise manner
• determine significance of supporting evidence
• revise interpretations when necessary
• recognize and analyze the cultural beliefs underpinning texts
• recognize and analyze bias, propaganda and stereotyping in texts

Apply knowledge of the characteristics and elements of various literary forms, including short stories, essays, speeches, lyric and narrative poems, plays, and novels:
• explain the use of symbols and figurative language
• describe inferred main ideas or themes with accompanying rationale
• discuss cause/effect relationships and their impact on plot
• describe how authors use characters, point of view, and tone to create meaning
• compare/contrast the use of the poetic elements of word choice, dialogue, rhyme, rhythm, and voice
• explain how a literary selection can expand or enrich personal viewpoints or experiences
• compare/contrast how different authors use literary techniques (e.g., foreshadowing, flashbacks, personification)
• evaluate author’s information and message

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts
Grade Level Performance Standards, Madison Metropolitan School District
**Assessment: How do I assess my student’s reading?**

**Why assess the middle school reader?**

Reading assessment is a major tool for guiding instruction. Assessment of the middle school reader assists in the development of a differentiated curriculum and helps teachers to make informed decisions that individualize instruction.

**What is the MMSD assessment philosophy?**

- Assessment measures what we value in student learning.
- Assessment underscores the belief that every person has a continuous capacity to learn.
- Assessment informs and is integral to instruction.
- Assessment requires a desire for meaningful information on a student’s strengths and needs.
- Assessments, both formal and informal, are necessary for measuring student achievement.
- Students’ self-assessment promotes their control over the reading process.

**What are the benefits of reading assessment?**

Reading assessment:

- Offers a useful performance profile, noting strengths and weaknesses of each student.
- Helps students develop awareness of their own reading process which prompts them to monitor their comprehension and select appropriate strategies.
- Informs the teacher’s instruction.
- Identifies each student’s instructional level.
- Facilitates arranging flexible groups for specific purposes.
- Helps parents follow their student’s development as a reader.
- Provides valuable student information to share across grade levels and within teams.
What are our middle school reading assessments?

Middle school reading assessments consist of two types: standardized instruments and informal measures that are ongoing. Both types of assessments provide useful information on middle school readers which guides instructional decision-making.

Standardized Reading Assessment

Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE)

Students in grades 6 and 7 take the WKCE-Criterion Referenced Test (WKCE-CRT), an assessment that measures student achievement in reading and mathematics. In addition, students in grade 8 take the full battery of WKCE-CRT, which includes reading, language arts, science, social studies and mathematics. The results are reported by proficiency categories (Minimal, Basic, Proficient, Advanced).

Informal/Ongoing Reading Assessment

Classroom teachers use two main forms of assessment to gather important information about a student's reading ability for the purpose of differentiating instruction. Consider the following tools when assessing a student's reading ability to match instruction with individual needs:

- **Informal assessments** - normed passages, such as informal reading inventories (IRIs), which measure a student's reading comprehension, rate, and vocabulary.

- **Ongoing assessments** - observational checklists, records, rubrics, and anecdotal notes which capture a student's processing, strategy use, and interaction with text while reading.
Informal Reading Inventories are useful to diagnose students’ reading abilities in order to plan and target instruction as well as to determine independent, instructional and frustration reading levels.

Each middle school staff should consider the school’s particular assessment needs and purpose for assessment when selecting an informal reading inventory.

Basic Reading Inventory (BRI)
Jerry L. Johns

The BRI is an informal reading inventory to diagnose students’ reading ability. This instrument will allow teachers to use consistent data to assess, plan, and program for students. Generally, MMSD intermediate students have been assessed using the BRI.

Flynt-Cooter (EERIC-English-Espanol Reading Inventory for the Classroom)
E. Sutton Flynt and Robert B. Cooter, Jr.

Qualitative Reading Inventory-3 (QRI-3)
Lauren Leslie and JoAnne Caldwell

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)
Scholastic, Inc.

Informal reading inventories provide diagnostic information so that teachers can match a student’s current reading level with appropriate texts. The following levels are typically described:

- **Instructional Level**: texts that a student can read and comprehend with assistance from teachers or more able peers.

- **Independent Level**: texts that a student can read and comprehend without assistance from teachers or more able peers.

- **Frustration Level**: texts which are too difficult for a student to read and comprehend even with assistance from teachers or more able peers.

Informal reading inventories thus help teachers determine which texts are an appropriate match for teaching readers in their zone of proximal development (the instructional level) and which texts are appropriate for individual practice in reading (the independent level).
**Ongoing reading assessments** are useful to both teachers and students for examining students’ reading behaviors as they engage in the reading process.

**Observation Checklist**

This observation checklist displays a developmental reading continuum of typical characteristics of struggling readers (left side) to strong readers (right side). As students grow as readers, they gradually move to the right across the continuum. Teachers can use this observation checklist to gauge students’ development as readers at various points in time.

### BEFORE READING, the student...

(Place an X on the continuum below each statement that describes the student’s current development as a reader.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>reluctance to approach reading tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td>confidently approaches reading tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>possesses limited background knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>activates background knowledge on the subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>inconsistently recalls or uses background knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>connects background knowledge to new learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>reads without a clear purpose</td>
<td></td>
<td>knows or determines a purpose for reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>reads without considering how to approach the material</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes predictions and chooses appropriate strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>sets minimal or no goals</td>
<td></td>
<td>sets relevant, attainable goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DURING READING, the student...

(Place an X on the continuum below each statement that describes the student’s current development as a reader.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>possesses a limited attention span</td>
<td></td>
<td>focuses complete attention on reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>needs guidance for reading tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td>is able to read independently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>possesses a limited vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td>possesses an extensive vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>does not consistently apply word attack skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>uses appropriate decoding or word attack skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>reads word-by-word and lacks fluency</td>
<td></td>
<td>reads fluently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>does not monitor comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td>monitors comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. does not perceive organizational structures</td>
<td>a. uses text structure to assist comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DURING READING, THE STUDENT...

b. reads everything at the same rate, often very slowly
  
c. reads to get done
  
d. gives up when reading is difficult or uninteresting
  
e. gets only pieces rather than integrating information
  
f. does not ask relevant questions
  
g. often does not create mental images while reading
  
h. does not realize and/or know what to do when there are misunderstandings
  
i. does not recognize important vocabulary
  
j. does not use context clues
  
k. uses a limited number of strategies or repeats mistakes

b. adjusts rate according to purpose
  
c. reads to learn; anticipates and predicts meaning
  
d. perseveres even with unfamiliar passages
  
e. organizes and integrates new information by searching for main ideas, inferring, synthesizing, etc.
  
f. raises questions related to the text
  
g. creates visual and sensory images from text
  
h. uses fix-up strategies to support understanding (re-read, read aloud, etc.)
  
i. strives to understand new terms
  
j. uses context clues
  
k. is flexible according to task

AFTER READING, THE STUDENT...

(Place an X on the continuum below each statement that describes the student's current development as a reader.)

1 2 3 4 5 6

forgets or mixes-up information  reflects on the reading and adds new information to knowledge base
  
only looks for “the answer” and gives verbatim responses  summarizes major ideas and recalls supporting details, makes inferences, draws conclusions, paraphrases
  
does not read outside of school  seeks additional information from outside sources
  
feels success is unattainable, a result of luck  feels success is a result of effort
  
relies on the teacher for information  independently gains information
  
expresses negative feelings about reading  expresses opinions about or pleasure in reading selections
  
avoids reading at all costs  chooses reading for the sheer joy of it

**Traits of a Reader Rubric**

The Traits of a Reader rubric can aid in monitoring and assessing key elements of students’ reading comprehension and thinking. This scoring rubric is based on a 5-point scale from emerging (1) to advanced (5) competence. This Traits of a Reader rubric is a useful tool for tracking student progress over the course of a school year.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Consciously draws upon a wealth of prior knowledge and experiences to make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections to understand text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly able to identify relevant personal knowledge and experiences as a key comprehension strategy when prompted to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Does not recognize how personal knowledge and experiences can be tapped to make sense of text. Has difficulty matching relevant personal knowledge and experiences to the demands of understanding text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SELF-QUESTIONING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Approaches a text in an inquiring mode before, during and after reading. Generates questions that may be clarifying, speculative, curious, critical or author-directed and searches for possible answers within the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly inclined to formulate significant questions before, during and after reading when prompted to wonder about text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is dependent on questions posed by others (author, teacher, etc.) to guide comprehension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### INFERRING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Consciously searches for implicit meanings through melding the author’s information with relevant prior knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly able to gain implicit meaning from a text with prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concentrates on explicit information; struggles with layers of implied meaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### VISUALIZING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Independently creates visual and sensory images through a sensitivity to the author’s language cues, both literal and figurative, and through accessing relevant prior knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly able to create visual and sensory images with prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Concentrates on identifying words and does not generate visual and sensory images from text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DETERMINING IMPORTANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Decides upon key ideas and themes by identifying meaningful relationships of information within text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly able to separate significant ideas and information from background details when prompted by learning tools such as graphic organizers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is unable to distinguish major ideas/themes from background information within text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SYNTHESIZING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Creates an essence of text, including personal interpretations and conclusions about meaning, which becomes new background knowledge that can be accessed in future learning situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly able to summarize text and to reflect on its meaning with prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is unable to condense a text into a concise, meaningful summary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### USING FIX-UP STRATEGIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assumes all text makes sense and confidently employs multiple strategies to achieve necessary comprehension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is increasingly able to monitor comprehension and use a variety of fix-up strategies with prompting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Does not expect reading to be meaningful and/or feels helpless to correct any deficiencies in comprehension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do I teach reading?

Establish a Reading Culture

Classroom Practices

- Expect students to select their own books and to read every day.
- Devote class time each day to independent reading.
- Share your enjoyment and love of reading. Read!
- Read aloud to students every day, across the curriculum, to foster students' appreciation of being literate. Read illustrated texts, realistic fiction, biographies, poetry, historical fiction, graphic novels, classical literature, modern fantasy and science fiction, mysteries, newspapers, and informational books. Discuss the characteristics of these different genres of literature.
- Model reading behaviors and strategies for students.
- Demonstrate the importance of knowing how to use a variety of authentic texts, including manuals, advertisements, job applications, menus, catalogs, reference books, etc.
- Share authors' life stories with students.
- Alert students and parents to author presentations at local bookstores.
- Study an author's writings, noting the traits and elements of craft, themes and stylistic features the author employs.
- Assign students to research an author.
- Guide students in determining the author's purpose for writing.
- Collaborate with the LMC Director to introduce new printed materials to students using book talks, book passes, featured authors, etc.
- Ask students to present book talks.
- Invite guest readers into your classroom to share their favorite reading material.
- Develop an extensive classroom library, including books on tape, that meets a range of independent reading levels.
- Encourage students to read books aloud, enjoy books of a favorite author, select books in a variety of genres based on interests, explore themes they are studying and reread books.

"For some people, but only some people, reading is an intrinsically delightful activity, similar to listening to music or having a pleasant dream..." – Anne Reeves, Adolescents Talk about Reading

"In a text-filled culture, a great distance opens between people who find reading restorative and almost as natural as eating and those who find it to be tedious labor." – Anne Reeves, Adolescents Talk about Reading
Read books from various genres, discussing the characteristics of the genre so that students become critical readers.

Celebrate books on featured lists: public library recommendations, bestsellers, award winners, favorite multicultural selections, and specific topic listings.

Celebrate special occasions: National Book Week, Teen Read Week, etc.

Encourage students to visit Web sites that feature authors, genres and literacy in general.

Create opportunities for students to share with one another their reading and writing experiences.

Expect students to reflect upon, respond to, and write about their reading.

Encourage students to participate in book clubs, literature circles, and Battle of the Books.

Inform parents about ways to support their student’s reading development.

“Learning to read well is a long-term developmental process. At the end point, the proficient adult reader can read a variety of materials with ease and interest, can read for varying purposes, and can read with comprehension even when the material is neither easy to understand nor intrinsically interesting.”

—R3ND Reading Study Group Reading for Understanding
**Teach Reading as a Metacognitive Process**

Metacognition refers to the process in which readers are “thinking about one’s thinking.” Readers consciously engage in making connections, questioning, visualizing, and synthesizing information and reflecting upon it. Proficient readers examine and monitor their own thinking.

The chart below contrasts the reading behaviors of struggling readers with those of strong readers. On the one hand, strong readers exhibit a variety of successful metacognitive behaviors before they begin to read a particular text, while they read that text, and even when they reflect back on a text they have read. On the other hand, struggling readers typically lack the metacognitive awareness necessary for effective reading of a text.

**Characteristics of Struggling and Strong Readers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before Reading</th>
<th>Struggling Readers</th>
<th>Strong Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reluctantly approach or resist reading tasks</strong></td>
<td>reluctantly approach or resist reading tasks</td>
<td>confidently approach reading tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possess limited background knowledge</strong></td>
<td>possess limited background knowledge</td>
<td>activate background knowledge on the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inconsistently recall or use background knowledge</strong></td>
<td>inconsistently recall or use background knowledge</td>
<td>connect background knowledge to new learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read without a clear purpose</strong></td>
<td>read without a clear purpose</td>
<td>know their purpose for reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read without considering how to approach the material</strong></td>
<td>read without considering how to approach the material</td>
<td>make predictions and choose appropriate strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Set minimal or no goals</strong></td>
<td>set minimal or no goals</td>
<td>set relevant, attainable goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DURING READING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Struggling Readers</th>
<th>Strong Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>possess a limited attention span</td>
<td>focus their complete attention on reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>need guidance for reading tasks</td>
<td>are able to read independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possess a limited vocabulary</td>
<td>possess an extensive vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not consistently apply word attack skills</td>
<td>use appropriate decoding or word attack skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read word-by-word, lack fluency</td>
<td>read fluently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not monitor their comprehension</td>
<td>monitor their comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. do not perceive organizational structures</td>
<td>a. use text structure to assist comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. read everything at the same rate, often very slowly</td>
<td>b. adjust rate according to purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. read to get done</td>
<td>c. read to learn; anticipate and predict meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. give up when reading is difficult or uninteresting</td>
<td>d. persevere with even unfamiliar passages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. get only pieces rather than integrating information</td>
<td>e. organize and integrate new information by searching for main ideas, inferring, synthesizing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. do not ask relevant questions</td>
<td>f. raise questions related to the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. often do not create mental images as they read</td>
<td>g. create visual and sensory images from text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. do not realize and/or know what to do when they do not understand</td>
<td>h. use fix-up strategies when they do not understand (re-read, read aloud, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. do not recognize important vocabulary</td>
<td>i. strive to understand new terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. do not use context clues</td>
<td>j. use context clues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use a limited number of strategies or repeat their mistakes</td>
<td>are flexible according to task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### AFTER READING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Struggling Readers</th>
<th>Strong Readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>forget or mix-up information</td>
<td>reflect on the reading and add new information to their knowledge base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only look for &quot;the answer&quot; and give verbatim responses</td>
<td>summarize major ideas and recall supporting details, make inferences, draw conclusions, paraphrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not read outside of school</td>
<td>seek additional information from outside sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel success is unattainable, a result of luck</td>
<td>feel success is a result of effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rely on the teacher for information</td>
<td>can independently gain information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express negative feelings about reading</td>
<td>express opinions about or pleasure in selections they have read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoid reading at all costs</td>
<td>choose reading for the sheer joy of it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHAT DO I TEACH?

COMPREHENSION: TRAITS OF A READER

Reading comprehension is the construction of meaning based on the interaction between the author’s words and the reader’s language, knowledge and life experiences.

Traits of a Reader

Proficient readers use the following seven thinking strategies to successfully comprehend a text:

1. Making Connections
   activating what they already know

2. Questioning
   inquiring and wondering as they read

3. Visualizing
   imagining what a text suggests

4. Inferring
   searching for implied meaning

5. Determining Importance
   selecting essential information and ideas

6. Synthesizing
   condensing to create a personal understanding

7. Using Fix-Up Strategies
   monitoring comprehension

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

☐ Comprehension is a process, not a product, of reading.

☐ Proficient readers are purposeful and metacognitive. Specifically, they think about their own thinking as they interact with text.

☐ Proficient readers engage in a "metacognitive conversation," which means they reflect on the effectiveness of the strategies they apply.

☐ Proficient readers evaluate the validity of the resources they use.

☐ Proficient readers identify when and why the meaning of text breaks down. They use a variety of strategies to gain understanding of the text.

☐ Proficient readers use cognitive strategies to deepen comprehension of both fiction and nonfiction text.
Classroom Practices

Making Connections

The reader deepens understanding by making connections to self, text and world and by activating relevant prior knowledge before, during and after reading.

Assess students’ ability to make connections. Use a variety of short texts to evaluate their independent understanding.

Use carefully planned book introductions and discussions to activate prior knowledge and pose questions before reading. If necessary, create new schema for comprehending concepts that are key to understanding the text, but are not part of students’ current experiences.

Model – Read a short text, paragraph, picture book or article aloud to students. Stop at key points to “think aloud” and share meaningful connections. Ex. “This reminds me of . . .”

- Text to self (T-S)
  Make connections to our own lives.

- Text to text (T-T)
  Make connections to what we previously have read.

- Text to world (T-W)
  Make connections to our understanding of the world.

Use the gradual release of responsibility, ultimately enabling students to make independent connections.

Assist students in tracking their thinking through coding text, written and artistic responses and oral discussion.

Teach strategies for making connections:

- Anticipation and prediction guides
  Statements which probe students’ current understandings and/or misconceptions.

- KWL+ (Know/Want To Know/Learned)
  Graphic organizer which prompts students’ current knowledge, their questions about a topic and organization of what they have learned after reading.

- Brainstorming
  Activities which prompt the activating and sharing of prior knowledge about a topic.

- Double-Entry diaries
  Two-column notes which organize students’ new learnings with personal connections to prior knowledge.

- Text coding
  Activity which involves students’ meaningful connections to a text, using sticky notes or codes such as “R—“reminds me of . . .”
**Questioning**

“I wonder if . . . I wonder what . . . I wonder why?” Asking questions is the art of carrying on an inner conversation with the author. Students then learn how to generate significant questions from the text as they interact with the author.

- Use a think-aloud to model how you raise questions while interacting with a short text. Pause several times during the think-aloud to ask students to pose their own questions, which they can share with partners or the entire group.

- Teach and reinforce a balance between generating “thick” and “thin” questions.

- Reinforce that readers use self-questioning before they read, as they read, and as they reflect after reading.

- Teach students to use sticky notes, text coding and text annotations while reading to track their own questioning.

- Provide opportunities for students to practice generating their own questions and sharing them with one another.

- Teach strategies for questioning:
  - **Thick and thin questions**
    Teacher-and student-generated questions which encourage clarification (thin) as well as higher-order thinking (thick).
  - **Question the author**
    Queries which address author's purpose, expectations, assumptions and use of language.
  - **Question-answer-relationship**
    Routine for analyzing the thinking inherent in answering questions on literal, inferential and analytical levels.
  - **Reciprocal teaching**
    Cooperative activity that prompts students to predict, question, clarify and summarize.
Visualizing

The reader uses visual, auditory and other sensory connections to the text to create mental images.

- Read aloud a text passage, stopping to model how you visualize while reading.
- Use guided imagery to prompt students to engage their imaginations as they interact with text.
- Use visual media (photos, film clips, video, illustrated texts) to build background knowledge that supports the creation of mental images.
- Assist students to identify author’s language that elicits imagery.
- Teach students to evaluate the author’s use of language as a writing tool to convey strong mental images, and to apply this knowledge in their own writing.
- Ask students to sketch or discuss visualizations throughout the reading process.
- Teach strategies for visualizing:
  - Guided imagery
    Listening activity which stimulates students to use their imaginations and senses to deepen learning.
  - Talking drawings
    Visual interpretation of a passage from a text, such as a sketch of a scene or process.
  - You ought to be in pictures
    Role-playing activity which involves examining a photograph or picture from the perspective that the viewer is actually a participant.

I can see it...
Inferring

The reader “reads between the lines” by using prior knowledge plus the author’s clues to create meaning and deepen understanding.

- Model inferring while reading aloud.
- Use brief passages, cartoons, poems and other literary genre to guide students as they practice inferential thinking.
- Ask students to generate text-based questions that surface while reading and infer possible answers.
- Use explicit language about inferring during daily classroom discourse about text, i.e. “Support your interpretation with evidence from the story.”
- Expect students to demonstrate evidence of inferential thinking in their academic discourse and written responses.
- Model the use of inferring to interpret the author’s possible meaning.

Teach strategies for inferring:

- Prediction activities
  Activities that encourage students to speculate about meaning, content and author intent.
- Story impressions
  Vocabulary list that guides students into activating prior knowledge about words and predicting possible meanings of and relationships among new terms.
- Possible sentences
  Activity similar to story impressions that encourages students to create sentences that meaningfully connect new key vocabulary.
Determining Importance

The reader identifies a purpose for reading, sifting essential information from background, in order to glean key ideas and themes.

- Demonstrate utilizing text features (bold and italicized print, headings, figures and photographs) to help distinguish important from unimportant information.
- Model how to identify text frames (e.g., cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem/solution) as a strategy for helping students discern patterns and structures of information to organize thinking and understanding.
- Assign students to work in small groups or with partners to practice determining importance with a variety of texts.
- Have students independently choose and use an appropriate graphic organizer to display key concepts or ideas in a text.
- Teach strategies for determining importance:
  - Two-column or three-column note-taking
    Note-taking systems which separate key themes and ideas from details.
  - Graphic organizers
    Visual representations that indicate the relationships among key information and ideas.
  - Selective underlining/highlighting
    Study method that prompts students to sort key ideas and information from background details.
  - Story map
    Graphic organizer that outlines the story grammar of a fictional text (events of plot, characters, setting, etc.)
Synthesizing

Synthesizing is recreating meaning. Students actively revise their thinking as they assimilate new information into their evolving understanding of text. This complex and dynamic process requires integrating all traits in order to give birth to new ideas, understandings, insights and responses.

- Designate regular classroom “reflection breaks” for students to analyze their learning.
- Model and provide opportunities for students to summarize.
- Ask students to recreate what they have learned by offering a choice of project-based, kinesthetic, auditory or visual representations of their personal learning.
- Use short text to model synthesis by pausing while reading and expressing personal insight- an “aha” moment. Then pull all these insights together to recreate meaning.
- Model the use of a summary/response form for recording important facts and personal responses to reading, which takes students beyond simply summarizing.
- Teach strategies for synthesizing:
  - Learning logs
    Informal writing that engages students in verbalizing their understandings and reflecting on their learning.
  - Magnet summaries
    Summarizing technique that involves identifying key terms that relate to a topic and integrating these terms into one or two meaningful sentences.
  - Content/process notes
    Two-column note-taking format in which students record both important learning from a text and metacognitive responses to that learning.
  - Summary-response
    Two-step written reaction to a text which combines summarizing the essence of a text with a reader’s personal response.
Using Fix-Up Strategies

Fix-up strategies are the metacognitive awareness routines that readers use to create meaning. As readers constantly monitor their comprehension, they employ fix-up strategies when reading fails to make sense.

Reinforce Traits of a Reader strategies:

- making connections
- inferring
- generating questions
- synthesizing
- determining importance
- using fix-up strategies
- visualizing

Ask students to verbalize what they do when they have problems while reading.

Think aloud to demonstrate that proficient readers frequently have unanswered questions after they read a text for the first time.

Encourage rereading, reading ahead, collaborating with peers, reading aloud as problem-solving strategies.

Teach word identification techniques (such as sounding out, chunking, using meaningful word parts and context clues).

Identify visual aspects of text (diagrams, illustrations, pictures, photos, graphic representations of information) which can assist understanding.

Assign students to access resources that help clarify meaning: glossaries, dictionaries, thesauruses, reference materials, Web sites, another classmate, or the teacher.

Teach fix-up strategies:

- Repeated readings
  - Student rereading of a text for new purposes to continue developing understanding.
- SMART (self monitoring for reading and thinking)
  - Protocol of problem-solving steps for addressing comprehension difficulties.
- Problem analysis grid
  - Two-column graphic organizer which prompts students to track comprehension problems and to log actions they take to repair their lack of understanding.
Literary Appreciation and Genre Study

**Literary appreciation** is valuing and responding to text as a communication medium that offers life-long learning and personal engagement.

**Genre** describes particular types of writing organized by structure, technique, purpose or content. Biography is a genre; science fiction is a genre; essay and poetry are both genres. Students learn to recognize salient characteristics of a variety of literary genre.

**What are the literary genres taught in middle school?**

Students need to read extensively from a range of genres during the middle school years. Genre study provides students with models that can be applied to their own writing.

### Informative
- Character Sketch
- Magazine/Newspaper Articles
- Interview
- Biography/Autobiography/Memoir
- Explanations/Directions
- Essay

### Persuasive
- Editorial
- Essay

### Imaginative/Literary
- Short Story
- Poetry
- Novel
- Drama/Plays
- Realistic Fiction
- Mystery/Horror
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Myths/Fables/Epic
- Historical Fiction
- Graphic Novel

### Functional
- Advertisement
- Exams
- Brochures
- E-mail
- Online communication

"Literature study is an introduction to the pleasures of the intellectual life."

— Jaunatas and Pinnell

"Struggling middle school readers like to read when they have access to materials that span the gamut of interests and difficulty levels."

— Gay Ivey

"Reflections on Teaching Struggling Middle School Readers"
**Important Considerations**

- Teachers introduce students to a variety of genres.
- Students have the opportunity to read in depth in genres that interest them.
- Teachers encourage students to broaden their exposure to a greater variety of literature.

**Classroom Practices**

- Connect genre study to standards and content area study whenever possible. For instance, biography and history; persuasive essay and social issues, science fiction and science.
- Refer to standards for your grade level to identify genres (e.g., biography, poetry) to study in depth throughout the year.
- Read aloud and have students read a variety of texts from a specific genre.
- Teach students significant vocabulary for identifying the characteristics of the genre:
  - Story map for fiction: character, plot, setting, etc.
  - Poetry: metaphors, imagery, stanzas, alliteration, etc.
  - Science fiction/fantasy: futuristic, blending of fantastic and realistic.
  - Mystery: motive, clues, suspect, etc.
- With students, analyze texts within a genre for specific genre characteristics.
- Study how different authors construct text in that genre.
- Create opportunities for students to read and discuss a genre using literature circles, shared reading, guided reading, partner reading and independent reading.
- Teach students specific strategies for reading particular genres (e.g., persuasive essay: proposition/support).
- Investigate with students how a writer's purpose and intended audience determines the genre they use.
- Encourage students to read in a variety of genres during independent reading.
- Listen closely to students' interests, guiding them into exploring new genres.
Fluency

Fluency is the ability to decode words quickly and accurately so that readers may concentrate on constructing the meaning of texts. Fluency involves reading a text smoothly with proper phrasing and expression.

Classroom Practices

- Make daily reading a priority.
- Use Read Alouds to model fluency.
- Model “chunking” reading in meaningful phrases, rather than reading word-by-word.
- Provide opportunities for repeated readings of text.
- Offer corrective feedback within guided reading group instruction.
- Provide frequent opportunities for students to see and hear fluent readers.
- Make available opportunities for students to critically listen to their own reading.
- Build awareness of effective personal reading rate.
- Select texts that are within each student’s independent reading level for fluency practice. Make sure most words are in their reading vocabulary.
- Reinforce and provide supportive instruction of decoding strategies.
- Provide opportunities for students to read aloud prepared text to an audience.
- Create an awareness of author cues like punctuation and italics that guide fluent reading.
- Encourage practice in intonation through dramatic, choral and echo readings, plays, Readers’ Theatre and partner readings.
- Create a listening center for books on tape.

“For these reasons—the development of vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and motivation to read—daily oral reading should happen at every grade level, at least through middle school.”

—Timothy Rasinski
The Fluent Reader
Fluent reading involves rapidly and automatically recognizing or decoding words, but that is not the whole story. Fluency also requires readers to use language systems at a good pace. Fluent reading demonstrates that the reader is accessing the deeper meaning of the text.

### Rubric for Oral Reading Fluency...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Rubric Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reads in large and meaningful phrases. May have some regressions, repetitions, and deviations which do not interfere with the overall structure of the story. Follows author’s syntax. Selection is read with expressive interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reads generally in three-or four-word phrase groups. Phrasing is appropriate and follows author’s syntax. Little expressive interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reads generally in two-word phrases with some three-or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reads word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur, but these are infrequent and/or they do not follow meaningful syntax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from NAEP’s Scale for Assessing Oral Reading Fluency.
Comprehension strategies are the foundation of all learning. Therefore, every teacher in the middle school shares the responsibility to incorporate comprehension instruction into the teaching of all content subjects.

The development of readers in the middle school is a shared responsibility. Middle school language arts teachers need to collaborate with teachers in the other curricular areas to build a coherent school-wide reading program. The MMSD Middle School Reading Task Force Report emphasizes that a comprehensive middle school reading program focuses on developing students who:

- use reading as a primary method of learning;
- can learn from increasingly complex content area reading materials;
- communicate effectively using reading and writing;
- acquire the habit of reading for enjoyment as a life-long pursuit.

The MMSD Traits of a Reader framework for reading comprehension provides a common language for all teachers as they work with students in their curricular areas. Comprehension instruction in the language arts classroom is, therefore, reinforced by teachers in other curricular areas as they engage students in learning meaningful content. Hence, all middle school teachers in every curricular area will benefit from the Traits of a Reader professional development course.

Collaboration among all middle school teachers on literacy strategy development is paramount. Each subject area teacher presents students with distinct academic discourse that influences students' ability to comprehend content materials and effectively learn key concepts. In some respects, the term genre is helpful in understanding these different academic discourses. For example, science texts feature literary genre that emphasize text structure applications, technical science vocabulary, and prior knowledge expectations that are not addressed in the language arts curriculum. Science texts are expository in nature, unlike the narrative texts that are predominant in the language arts curriculum. Therefore, students need explicit comprehension instruction from their science teacher on how to apply reading strategies to science texts. The same is true for math texts, social studies texts, foreign language texts, and all other subject areas taught at the middle school level.

Language Arts teachers take the lead with text genre central to their curriculum, i.e. narrative text, fiction, novels, short stories and poetry. Students do not tend to generalize skills and strategies learned while studying fiction to materials of a different genre. Therefore, strategy instruction with other text genres that are expository in form must be integral to the learning of content in science, math, social studies and other middle school curricular areas.
Middle school structures often provide rich opportunities for collaboration between language arts teachers and colleagues who teach other academic subjects. Teachers who work in teams and teachers who design integrated curriculum are in a prime position to employ strategy instruction across the curriculum. In addition, middle school language arts teachers may also have the responsibility of teaching other curricular subjects, such as social studies. These teachers have a special opportunity to foster student thinking in both narrative and social studies expository texts.

Classroom Practices

Reading practices across the curriculum reflect specific applications of the strategies outlined for each one of the Traits of a Reader as described in this section. These strategies must be tailored to the text features and content learning goals of each curricular area.

✓ Chapter survey
Guided overview which demonstrates how information is presented and concepts are emphasized in various types of content texts.

✓ Vocabulary development
Activities that prompt students to effectively learn and confidently use key content terminology as they speak and write about their learning in each curricular area (concept definition mapping).

✓ Graphic organizers
Visual representations of key information from a text which display how ideas are related and connected (Venn diagram).

✓ Writing across the curriculum
Various writing activities which ask students to express their understanding of content concepts (learning logs, essays, RAFT or Role/Audience/Format/Topic assignments).
How do I create independent readers?

Read Aloud and Think Aloud

In a read aloud, students listen to the teacher read quality literature from a variety of genres. Teachers choose books according to student interests, content topics, curricular themes, author studies and strategies they are teaching. Fluent, expressive oral reading is an important component.

In a think aloud, teachers pause and interject their own thinking about the text. A think aloud is key to the explicit modeling of reading comprehension strategies.

Shared Reading

In shared reading, the teacher initially reads aloud while the students silently follow the text. Shared reading allows some students to work with text at a higher level than they could independently. The teacher uses shared reading to make new text accessible to students and to provide practice in fluency through repeated readings.

Guided Reading

In guided reading, students are placed in small flexible, homogeneous groups based on similar reading strengths and challenges. The teacher chooses instructionally appropriate text based on students' needs and specific teaching points. With the teacher's modeling and support, the students silently read and interact with the text.

Independent Reading

In independent reading, students develop an appreciation of reading, develop fluency and practice metacognitive strategies. Independent reading is integral to daily classroom practice so that students gradually sustain focus for increasing periods of time. During independent reading, students enjoy uninterrupted class time to read self-selected texts at their independent reading level.
**Read Aloud and Think Aloud**

*In a read aloud, students listen to the teacher read quality literature from a variety of genres. Teachers choose selections according to student interests, content topics, curricular themes, author studies and strategies they are teaching. Fluent, expressive oral reading is an important component.*

*In a think aloud, teachers pause and interject their own thinking about the text. A think aloud is key to the explicit modeling of reading comprehension strategies.*

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**Gradual Release of Responsibility**

**Reading**
- Read Aloud
- Shared
- Guided
- Independent

**Writing**
- Modeled
- Shared
- Guided
- Independent

---

**The Value of a Read Aloud and a Think Aloud**

- Provides opportunities for students to hear the language, dialects, rhythm and structure of different genres such as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, biographies, illustrated texts, fables and mysteries.
- Connects spoken and written language.
- Extends students’ listening vocabulary and comprehension.
- Fosters fluency, strengthens word identification and pronunciation.
- Provides necessary opportunities for teachers to explicitly model comprehension strategies by sharing their metacognition with students.
- Exposes students to new authors and genres that students may choose to read independently.
- Builds background knowledge.
- Fosters a community of learners across curricular areas.
- Promotes the love of books and motivation to read, which results in higher reading achievement.
- Allows struggling readers to hear more sophisticated texts and to delight in the written word without the obstacle of deciphering the words.
- Provides writing models for students.

---

"If teachers can begin to slow down their thinking and notice what they do as expert readers of their content, they will know how to design effective strategy instruction."

– Cris Tovani

*Do I Really Have to Teach Reading*
The “How To” of a Read Aloud and a Think Aloud

1. Continuously assess student learning based on observation and purpose.

2. Establish a purpose for the read aloud and think aloud:
   - Address standards.
   - Engage the learner.
   - Explicitly model and reinforce Traits of a Reader strategies.
   - Inform the listener.
   - Plan for cross-curricular integration.
   - Consider students’ interests.
   - Entertain.
   - Connect to 6 + 1 Traits® of Writing.
   - Demonstrate the use of graphic organizers to deepen comprehension: KWL+, two-column or three-column note-taking, charting, Venn diagram.

3. Model expressive oral reading (with high energy; sensitivity to emotional content; variation in inflection, intonation and phrasing).

4. Plan approximately 10 minutes for the read aloud and think aloud.

5. Tell students that a think aloud requires more time than reading silently.

6. Stay current with new, engaging adolescent literature. The LMC director is an excellent resource.
Shared Reading

In shared reading, the teacher initially reads aloud while the students silently follow the text. Shared reading allows some students to work with text at a higher level than they could independently. The teacher uses shared reading to make new text accessible to students and to provide practice in fluency through repeated readings.

The Value of Shared Reading

- Supports students with voice and text.
- Leads to increased reading achievement gains for middle and high school students, as research indicates.
- Exposes students to a variety of texts and purposes for reading.
- Supports students as they interpret and analyze more challenging text.
- Builds and supports students' confidence and positive attitude about reading.
- Enhances students' appreciation of text as a source of information.
- Allows teachers to share their interest and passion for reading to motivate students.
- Shows students how to activate strategies for comprehension.
- Supports effective heterogeneous grouping.

“We know that we need never be alone as long as there are books and people who can share with us their own delight in exploring the world through reading.”

– Donald Graves
A Fresh Look at Writing
The “How To” of Shared Reading

1. Continuously assess student learning based on observation and purpose.

2. Establish a purpose for shared reading:
   - Address standards and support content area learning.
   - Introduce and reinforce comprehension strategies.
   - Plan for cross-curricular integration.
   - Connect with students’ interests.
   - Connect to Six Traits + 1 of writing.

3. Choose appropriate text that best supports comprehension teaching points, such as building background knowledge, analyzing the writer’s style and characteristics of various genres.

4. Provide sufficient background knowledge in your introduction to your chosen selection.

5. With the students silently following along, read aloud from a common text.

6. Have students reread for deeper meaning.

7. Plan approximately 10 to 20 minutes for shared reading lessons.

“...students who participate in engaged shared reading have the opportunity to participate in the experience of reading—not just the skill of reading, but the experience of words making us see the world in a different way.”

—Janet Allen
*Yellow Brick Roads*
**Guided Reading**

*In guided reading, students are placed in small flexible, homogeneous groups based on similar reading strengths and challenges. The teacher chooses instructionally appropriate text based on students' needs and specific teaching points. With the teacher's modeling and support, the students silently read and interact with the text.*

---

**The Value of Guided Reading**

- Meets the range of instructional needs of all students.
- Gives students opportunities to practice reading text fluently with assistance.
- Helps students to take ownership of comprehension strategies.
- Allows the teacher to focus on a specific strategy with small groups of 4 to 5 students.
- Provides opportunities for ongoing assessment.
- Demands flexibility in grouping as determined by assessment.
The “How To” of Guided Reading

Determining Initial Groups

1. Establish a culture conducive to small group work.

2. Formally and informally assess students to identify strengths and needs.

3. Interpret assessments and use the information to determine temporary flexible groups and teaching points.

4. Identify specific needs of individual students, determine the length and frequency of reading groups, and meet more frequently with students needing additional support.

In a Guided Reading Lesson:

1. Choose one or two teaching points based on ongoing assessment and observation.

2. Based on student assessment, choose text appropriate in length and difficulty to build on the readers’ strengths.

3. Have students ultimately read the text with a specific plan which reflects the teaching points. Incorporate written, oral and artistic responses that require student reflection.

4. Remind students that the strategy they are learning needs to be applied continuously and independently in all reading situations.

5. Plan guided reading sessions for approximately 15 to 20 minutes.
Independent Reading

In independent reading, students develop an appreciation of reading, develop fluency and practice metacognitive strategies. Independent reading is integral to daily classroom practice so that students gradually sustain focus for increasing periods of time. During independent reading, students enjoy uninterrupted class time to read self-selected texts at their independent reading level.

The Value of Independent Reading

During independent reading, students:

☐ Pursue interests and love of reading.
☐ Select text at their independent reading level.
☐ Increase amount of time spent reading.
☐ Read like a writer.
☐ Enhance reading fluency.
☐ Practice reading strategies.
☐ Confer with peers and the teacher.

The “How To” of Independent Reading

1. Develop a classroom library and resources containing various genres (newspapers, nonfiction, fiction, graphic novels, magazines, books on tape).
2. Designate time for independent reading.
3. Divide your time between modeling independent reading and informally assessing and conferencing with individual students.
How do I help my struggling adolescent readers?

**IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- Just as there is no typical student, neither is there a typical “middle school struggling adolescent reader.”
- Defining the struggling reader is complex.
- Struggling adolescent readers may include English Language Learners (ELL), special education students (EEN) and regular education students who need additional reading instruction.
- Every middle school student should receive explicit instruction in reading.
- Struggling adolescent readers benefit from a double dose of reading instruction such as READ 180, tutoring, or an additional reading course.

**CLASSROOM PRACTICES**

- Hold high expectations for student success. Have a strong sense of personal commitment to each student.
- Enthusiastically demonstrate your love of reading through book talks, read-alouds, and literature discussions.
- Collaborate with each student to set reading goals.
- Access available assessment information (reading surveys, SRI’s).
- Conduct assessments.
- Fill your classroom with a range of texts to accommodate all readers.
- Develop differentiated classroom text sets—containers of materials created by students or teachers that offer multiple levels and genres on a subject or theme, including tradebooks, art, music, magazines and Internet sites.
- Provide choice and time for students to read, read, read.
- Provide practice in developing fluency through read alouds, dramatic reading of plays with practice, partner oral reading, choral reading and audiotapes. Avoid unrehearsed turn-by-turn round robin reading.
- Advocate for a 90-minute literacy block.
- Model extensively and over time the Traits of a Reader comprehension strategies.
- Have students routinely share their metacognition and how using particular strategies affects their comprehension.
☐ Gather motivating materials tailored to students’ interests.

☐ Integrate reading and writing to enhance students’ understanding of text and word development using:

  ✓ Response journals
  ✓ Learning logs
  ✓ Genre study

☐ Have students create reading portfolios to monitor reading progress.

☐ Reflect on your expectations for struggling readers by asking the following questions:

  ✓ Can you specifically name strengths this student brings to reading?
  ✓ Do you know the student’s current instructional and independent reading levels?
  ✓ Are you aware of how the student draws on meaning, language structure and visual cues in reading?
  ✓ How can you use the student’s current knowledge to foster deeper understanding at the word and concept levels?

☐ Increase frontloading of vocabulary, new concepts, and strategy instruction that students will need to gain meaning in text.
Writing
WISCONSIN CONTENT STANDARD: Students in Wisconsin will write clearly and effectively to share information and knowledge, to influence and persuade, to create and entertain.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: By the end of grade EIGHT, students will:

Create or produce writing to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

- Write a coherent and complete expository piece, with sufficient detail to fulfill its purpose, sufficient evidence to support its assertions, language appropriate for its intended audience, and organization achieved through clear coordination and subordination of ideas
- Write a persuasive piece (such as a letter to a specific person or a script promoting a particular product) that includes a clear position, a discernible tone, and a coherent argument with reliable evidence
- Write a narrative based on experience that uses descriptive language and detail effectively, presents a sequence of events, and reveals a theme
- Write clear and pertinent responses to verbal or visual material that communicate, explain, and interpret the reading or viewing experience to a specific audience
- Write creative fiction that includes major and minor characters, a coherent plot, effective imagery, descriptive language, and concrete detail
- Write in a variety of situations (during an exam, in a computer lab) and adapt strategies, such as revision, technology, and the use of reference materials, to the situation
- Use a variety of writing technologies including pen and paper as well as computers
- Write for a variety of readers, including peers, teachers, and other adults, adapting content, style, and structure to audience and situation

Plan, revise, edit, and publish clear and effective writing.

- Produce multiple drafts, including finished pieces, that demonstrate the capacity to generate, focus, and organize ideas and to revise the language, organization, content, and tone of successive drafts in order to fulfill a specific purpose for communicating with a specific audience
- Identify questions and strategies for improving drafts in writing conferences with a teacher
- Given a writing assignment to be completed in a limited amount of time, produce a well developed, well organized, and effective response in correct English and an appropriate voice

Understand the function of various forms, structures, and punctuation marks of standard American English and use them appropriately in communications.

- Understand the function of words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence and use them effectively, including coordinate and subordinate conjunctions, relative pronouns, and comparative adjectives
- Use correct tenses to indicate the relative order of events
- Understand and employ principles of agreement, including subject-verb, pronoun-noun, and preposition-pronoun
- Punctuate compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences correctly
- Employ the conventions of capitalization
- Spell frequently used words correctly and use effective strategies for spelling unfamiliar words
MMSD Grade Level Performance Standards: The student will

Grade 6

Write in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes to describe, to inform, to entertain, and to explain across content areas:

- use a variety of planning strategies to generate and organize ideas
- establish central idea, organization, elaboration, and unity
- select vocabulary and information to enhance the central idea, tone, and voice
- expand ideas
- use transition words to connect ideas
- use a balance of simple and complex sentences
- revise writing for clarity

Use writing as a tool for learning in all subjects:

- make lists
- paraphrase what is heard or read
- summarize what is heard or read
- hypothesize
- connect knowledge within and across disciplines
- synthesize information

Edit final copies for grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Use a word processor to plan, draft, revise, and publish writing.

Grade 7

Develop narrative, expository, and persuasive writings:

- write for a variety of purposes and audiences to describe, inform, entertain, explain, and persuade, in all content areas
- apply knowledge of pre-writing strategies
- elaborate the central idea in an organized manner
- choose vocabulary and information that will effectively communicate the author's intent and voice
- revise for clarity, style, vocabulary and accurate information

Edit final copies for grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
Use a word processor to plan, draft, revise, and publish some writing.

Grade 8

Write in a variety of forms, including narrative, expository, and persuasive:

- use pre-writing strategies to generate and organize ideas
- focus on elaboration and organization
- select specific vocabulary and information
- use personal voice
- use standard sentence formation
- write fluently
- revise writing for word choice, appropriate organization, consistent point of view, and transitions among paragraphs

Edit final copies for grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

Use a word processor to plan, draft, revise, and publish writing.
Assessment: How do I assess my student’s writing?

Why assess the middle school writer?

Focused large-group assessment, as well as frequent analysis of student writing (such as 6 + 1 Traits®) offer evidence of development in writing and guide the next teaching points.

In addition, ongoing assessment through observation, conferences, and daily anecdotal notes captures student understanding and engagement in the writing process.

What is the MMSD assessment philosophy?

- Assessment measures what we value in student learning.
- Assessment practice underscores the belief that every person has a continuous capacity to learn.
- Assessment informs and is integral to instruction.
- Assessment requires a desire for meaningful information on a student’s strengths and needs.
- Assessments, both formal and informal, are necessary for measuring student achievement.
- Students’ self-assessment promotes their control over the writing process.

What are the benefits of writing assessment?

Writing assessment:

- Offers a useful performance profile for all students.
- Places attention on writing as a valuable part of our literacy curriculum.
- Raises expectations for both teacher and student.
- Informs the teacher’s instruction.
- Aids the student in gaining increasing control of their writing process.
- Helps parents follow their student’s development as a writer.
- Facilitates arranging flexible groups to work on specific skills.
**What is our middle school writing assessment?**

Each year, students in grade 7 complete a writing assessment. Over three 45-minute sessions, students select and write to one of three prompts. Students plan, draft, revise and edit a piece of writing during this assessment. Using the **6 + 1 Traits® criteria and five-point rubric**, teacher scorers assess the student writing samples. Each paper is scored twice. If the score is more than one point apart on any trait, a third teacher scores that trait. Students receive an average of the scores for each of the six traits.

**What is the 6 + 1 Traits® assessment model?**

The 6 + 1 Traits® model was developed in the state of Oregon in the mid 1980’s from the research of Paul Diederich. Diederich’s work sought to find agreement on what makes writing work and whether language could describe those attributes. The work was condensed into the 6 + 1 Traits® model with a scoring guide. States throughout the country have adopted the six traits. Instead of one global score on a piece of writing, this model creates a performance profile for the writer highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement in the traits.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ideas and Content</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Paper is clear and focused. Holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or storyline.</td>
<td>Ideas are fresh and original. Writing from knowledge or experience. Relevant, telling, quality go beyond the obvious. Topic developed in an enlightening, purposeful way. Every piece adds something to the whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.</td>
<td>Easy to see where the writer is headed. Difficulty going from general observations to specifics. Ideas are reasonably clear. Support is attempted, but falls short of fleshing out the main point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy details.</td>
<td>Still in search of a topic. Information is very limited or unclear. Text may be repetitious, reads like disconnected, random thoughts. Everything seems as important as everything else.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Organization enhances and showcases the central idea or storyline. The order, structure or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.</td>
<td>Sequencing is logical and effective. An inviting introduction: a satisfying conclusion. Pacing is well controlled. Thoughtful transitions. Flows smoothly, the reader hardly thinks about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Organization is strong enough to move the reader through the text without undue confusion.</td>
<td>Recognizable introduction and conclusion. Sequencing is logical, but predictable. Pacing fairly well controlled. Transitions often work well but are sometimes fuzzy. Organization sometimes supports the main storyline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details or events seem loosely strung together; no identifiable internal structure.</td>
<td>Sequencing needs work. No real lead, no real conclusion. Pacing feels awkward. Connections between ideas are confusing. Hard for the reader to get a grip.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Voice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Writer speaks directly to the reader, writing is individualistic, expressive and engaging. Writer is involved in the text, writing to be read.</td>
<td>Strong interaction with the writer, person behind the words. Appropriate for the purpose and audience. Narrative is honest, appealing, and written from the heart. Expository or persuasive, reflects a strong commitment, anticipates the reader's questions and shows why the reader should care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. Pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.</td>
<td>Communicates in a earnest, pleasing manner. General, dispassionate language. Writing hides as much of the writer as it reveals. Aware of an audience, to weigh words carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writer seems indifferent, uninvolved or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. Writing is lifeless or mechanical; technical or jargonistic.</td>
<td>Hard to sense the writer. Does not seem to reach out to an audience. Monotone. May communicate on a functional level, but it does not move reader. Writer does not seem at home with the topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Word Choice

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</table>
| 5     | Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting and natural way. | ✓ Words are specific and accurate.  
✓ Language is natural and never overdone.  
✓ Lively verbs, precise nouns and modifiers.  
✓ Striking words and phrases.  
✓ Clichés, jargon used sparingly. |
| 3     | Language is functional, even if it lacks punch; it gets the message across. | ✓ Words correct and adequate; they simply lack flair.  
✓ Familiar words and phrases.  
✓ Attempts colorful language but sometimes seems overdone.  
✓ Energetic verbs, phrases liven things up now and then. |
| 1     | The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, searching for words to convey meaning. | ✓ Vague.  
✓ Redundancy.  
✓ Jargon or clichés.  
✓ Words are used incorrectly.  
✓ Language leaves reader wondering what writer’s trying to say. |

## Sentence Fluency

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<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</table>
| 5     | Easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built with strong and varied structure. | ✓ Sentences make meaning clear.  
✓ Purposeful sentence beginnings.  
✓ The writing has cadence.  
✓ Varied in length as well as structure.  
✓ Fragments, if used, add style. |
| 3     | The text hums along with a steady beat, more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid. | ✓ Sentences usually grammatical, hang together.  
✓ Some variation in sentence length and structure.  
✓ Reader sometimes has to hunt for clues that show how sentences interrelate.  
✓ Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading. |
| 1     | The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. | ✓ Choppy, incomplete, rambling or awkward.  
✓ Phrasing does not sound natural.  
✓ Sentences begin the same way.  
✓ Endless connectives.  
✓ Does not invite expressive oral reading. |

## Conventions

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<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</table>
| 5     | Demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions, uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few and so minor that the reader can easily overlook them. | ✓ Paragraphing tends to be sound.  
✓ Grammar and usage are correct.  
✓ Punctuation is accurate.  
✓ Spelling is generally correct.  
✓ May manipulate conventions—especially grammar and spelling—for stylistic effects.  
✓ Grades 7 & up: Writing is sufficiently long and complex.  
✓ Only light editing for publication. |
| 3     | Reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometime handled well and enhance readability. | ✓ Paragraphing is attempted.  
✓ Problems with grammar/usage not serious.  
✓ Terminal (end-of-sentence) punctuation is usually correct.  
✓ Spelling is usually correct or phonetic on common words.  
✓ Moderate editing required for publication. |
| 1     | Errors in spelling, punctuation, usage and grammar, capitalization, and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. | ✓ Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or too frequent.  
✓ Errors in grammar/usage are very noticeable.  
✓ Punctuation often missing or incorrect.  
✓ Spelling errors are frequent.  
✓ Must read once to decode; again for meaning.  
✓ Extensive editing required for publication. |
### Presentation

| 5 | The form, placement, and presentation of the text, graphics and other images enhance the reader’s ability to understand and connect with the message. |
|   | ✓ The text is easy to read whether typed or handwritten. |
|   | ✓ The font, size and style are appropriate and support the message. |
|   | ✓ The format suits the purpose, is appealing and invites the reader into the text. |
|   | ✓ Fonts are limited to two typefaces on a page. |
|   | ✓ Spacing supports readability. |
|   | ✓ The text is not crowded—white space enhances readability. |
|   | ✓ The use of a title, sub headings, page numbers, bullets and other formatting allows the reader to access information easily and quickly. The information is clear to the reader. |
|   | ✓ There is a clear purpose for combining text and graphics (to include charts, graphs, tables). The alignment between text and visuals is clearly represented. |
|   | ✓ Presentation is creative and original in design. |

| 3 | The message is understood by the reader. |
|   | ✓ The text is readable. Discrepancies in form and spacing make some parts easier to read than others. |
|   | ✓ The font, size and style are inconsistent. |
|   | ✓ Spacing is uniform although some variation in spacing may make text easier to read. |
|   | ✓ Some text tends to be crowded with little attention to the use of white space. |
|   | ✓ The use of a title, sub headings, page numbers, bullets and other formatting may be evident but is not used to the fullest potential. |
|   | ✓ There is an attempt made to combine text and graphics although connections are not always clear. |

| 1 | The message is unclear because of problems relating to presentation. |
|   | ✓ The text is difficult to read and understand. |
|   | ✓ The use of multiple fonts, sizes and styles has created a ransom note effect. |
|   | ✓ Spacing is random and confusing. |
|   | ✓ There is little or no white space—very text intensive. |
|   | ✓ There is a lack of formatting which leaves the reader wondering how ideas connect. |
|   | ✓ The visuals do not support text. They are misleading, overdone, or do not connect to the reader’s message. |

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon.
Establish a Writing Culture

Classroom Practices

- Establish a quiet, comfortable, risk-free setting in which students can express their ideas in written form. Consider the physical arrangement of your classroom and the organization and accessibility of writing materials.

- Spend the first few weeks with students exploring their interests and experiences by completing interest inventories, personal time lines, partner interviews, photo biographies, and other community building activities. Student writers need to know that they have important ideas to share and that these will be respectfully received in their classroom.

- Expect that all students have ideas, and all of them will write. Students should understand what is expected of them.

- Encourage students to discover and select their own writing topics. Make connections to other parts of the curriculum.

- Ask students to record writing ideas in a journal or spiral notebook.

- Engage students in the writing process and continue to teach strategies for moving from one step to another in the writing process.

- Revise, edit, or publish as appropriate. Not all writing needs to reach publication.

- Ask students to reflect on their work and the writing process. This reflection can happen in conferences, conversations or in writing.
**Teach Writing as a Recursive Process**

Writing involves a number of stages: pre-writing, drafting, conferencing, revising, editing, publishing and sharing. Writing is a recursive process, which means that a writer may go back and forth among the stages rather than move through them in sequential order.

**Pre-writing** is the brainstorming, thinking, drawing, research reading, or planning that occurs before the draft.

- What am I going to write about?
- What do I want to say?
- Who is my audience, and what is important for them to know?
- How will I plan for my writing?
  - Brainstorm
  - List
  - Web
  - Draw
  - Graphic organizer, Inspiration software
- What form will I use for my final piece?

**Drafting** is the first attempt at generating and shaping ideas in text.

- What do I want to say?
- What are my main ideas?
- Do I understand the form I am using - essay, short story, poem, etc.?
- Have I chosen the appropriate form for my purpose and audience?
- How can I use my own ideas and experiences to make my writing interesting? How can I personalize it?
- Do I need imagery and sensory details?
- In rereading my writing:
  - Will the reader understand what I mean?
  - Have I captured the important points?
  - Does my writing make sense?
  - Have I written enough?

**Conferencing** is the opportunity to share, to converse, and to receive feedback about the text. Feedback from conferencing will allow the writer to answer the following questions:

- Do I know enough about the topic to keep writing, or do I need to go back and gather more information?
- Did my audience understand what I wrote?
- Are there any words or phrases I could change?
What part am I planning to work on next?
Do I have an idea for the conclusion?
What suggestions will I use in my revisions?
What do I like best about the writing?

Revising is the process of revisiting, rethinking and “seeing again” to extend and refine the written text.

- Have I used original ideas and captured the essence?
- Is my organization logical?
- Will the reader hear my personality and voice?
- Is my word choice colorful and precise?
- Do my sentences have rhythm and flow?
- Is my conclusion strong?

Editing is the process of “fixing up” the conventions (spelling, punctuation and grammar).

- Is my paragraphing sound?
- Is my grammar and usage correct?
- Is my punctuation accurate?
- Is my spelling correct? Did I use a dictionary or spell checker?
- Have I proofread my writing so it is ready to share?
- Is my writing legible?

Publishing is producing a final text or presentation after the revising and editing is complete.

- How can I publish my writing to best reach my audience - hand in to teacher, share aloud, send to the newspaper, magazine, Web site, etc.?
- What materials will I use?
- Have I followed the guidelines for final copy?
- How will I make my writing attractive (name, margins, title)?

Sharing is presenting the text in an appropriate context for a selected audience.

- Is there an authentic audience for my writing?
- How will my audience respond to my writing?
- Where and how will I display my writing?
- How will I use the audience feedback to improve my future writing?
What do I teach?

6 + 1 Traits®

The 6 + 1 Traits® are the key qualities that define good writing.

- **Ideas**—the heart of the message with supporting details to enrich the main theme
- **Organization**—the internal structure and logical pattern of ideas
- **Voice**—the personal tone and conviction of the author
- **Word Choice**—the vocabulary chosen to convey the precise meaning
- **Sentence Fluency**—the rhythm and flow of the language
- **Conventions**—the mechanical correctness
- **Presentation**—the visual and verbal elements combined. It is the way we exhibit our message

"The only way to build the quality of writing in a school is to create, share and celebrate the specific criteria for that quality with everybody on a regular basis."

—Barry Lane

After the End

**Important Considerations**

- Introduce the concept of traits, one trait at a time. Study each one in depth.
- Share with students the scoring guide (criteria) of the six traits.
- Use illustrated texts and other written materials to provide quality models of writing that represent each trait.
- Give students the opportunity to discuss traits and to reflect on the use of each trait in their writing.
- Provide students with repeated opportunities to read, score, and discuss anonymous papers for each of the six traits.
- Use focused lessons to model revision of a specific trait or combination of traits.
- Teach students through modeling to use self-assessment in revising and setting goals. Expect that students will practice self-assessment by:
  - Reflecting on their written work
  - Reflecting on the writing process
  - Reflecting on their writing growth over time.
Ideas

Ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

- Model and guide students to keep a list of ideas, questions, images, and favorite phrases in a journal or notebook.
- Encourage students to tell their own stories and share their interests to generate ideas.
- Lead discussions on narrowing a topic through questioning. Use Who, What, Which, Where, When and Why questions to narrow focus.
- Read several excerpts from literature rich in sensory images. Use a two-column organizer to record ideas of What I See? What I Feel?
- Share unclear or unfocused writing samples to revise for clarity of ideas. Ask: Can the writing stand alone? Are your questions answered? Does the writing create a vivid image of the topic? Is it rich in details? Does every detail mean something?
- Gather and compare examples of writing that can stand alone with clear word choice, use of sensory detail, strong setting and character details, good evidence of research or knowledge of the topic.
- Have students use their own writings to revise for clarity of ideas.

“When I was in school, I thought details were just extra words to add in a story to make it better. I thought detail was decoration or wallpaper…

Details are not wallpaper; they are walls.”

– Barry Lane
After the End

The trees are pencils perching on the mossy green grass.

ML and CC 1:49
Organization

Organization is the internal structure of a piece of writing, the thread of central meaning and the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas.

- Gather examples and discuss ways authors use a variety of techniques to create strong leads that hook the reader. Assign students to gather leads as well.
- Gather examples and discuss ways authors use a variety of techniques to create satisfying conclusions. Ask: How do authors end writing? Is there a summary statement? Final observation? A question? A reflection on new learning? Is there closure?
- Share two to three leads written from a piece of your own writing. Have students select the best one and explain why. Ask students to do the same with a partner or in small groups.
- Select a well-organized text. Cut the text apart by sentences or paragraphs and give it to students out of order. With a partner or in small groups, assign students to reorder the text so that it makes sense.
- Gather and read a variety of excerpts to identify organizational patterns, (e.g. cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem/solution, proposition/support, description, sequence). Identify main points and use a graphic organizer to model the organization of the text.
- Ask students to write examples based on patterns they have studied.
- Share texts and examine the ways authors connect sentences to link ideas together. Develop with students a list of these transition words and phrases.
- Have students use their own writings to revise for organizational sequence and transitions between sentences.

"The purpose of revision is not to correct, but to discover."

—Lucy McCormick Calkins
The Art of Teaching Writing
Voice

Voice is the heart and soul, the magic, the wit, along with the feeling and conviction of the individual writer showing through the words.

- Play “Whose Voice Is It?” to match authors with their writings.
- Share favorite passages that you enjoy reading aloud. Discuss what characteristics make these writings full of the author’s voice. Ask: What is the tone or attitude of this writing? Is it humorous? Is it serious?
- Ask students to develop their own definition of voice and share writings they feel have voice. Ask students to read them aloud with feeling and see if other students can identify voice.
- Share informational passages with both strong and weak voice. Talk about how voice comes through in expository writing: in strong passages, in conversational style, in descriptive language, in use of dialogue?
- Request that students revise informational, expository text weak in voice (set of directions, informational pamphlet). Have them read the revision aloud to a partner and then to the whole group. List the strategies used to strengthen a piece for voice.
- Read several writing samples and ask students to identify the intended audience. Ask: Who is the intended audience? How do we know? How does the writer use voice to reach this audience?
- Create with students two versions of the same writing for two different audiences. Discuss how voice changes based on audience.

“Writing with voice is writing into which someone has breathed…

Writing with real voice has the power to make you pay attention and understand—the words go deep.”

—Peter Elbow

Writing with Power
Word Choice

Word choice is the use of rich, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.

- Assign students to gather and share writing excerpts that show, not tell. Discuss the rich use of descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs), vivid verbs, precise words.
- Create and display a collection of words and phrases that work. This bulletin board display can serve to pique ideas for writing. Throughout the year, as a class, continue to add new findings.
- Model the use of a thesaurus as you revise a piece of writing for word choice.
- Select a passage with lively verbs. Rewrite a portion by replacing the verbs with dull, common words. Have students generate replacement verbs and then compare with the original to see how close they came to writing a similar passage.
- Model and guide students in the use of synonyms with various connotations. Choose a familiar place and write two paragraphs about the place (one, a positive perspective; the other, negative).
- Share poems with students to locate rich visual and sensory images. Also ask students to collect poems for this purpose.

Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just to the eye.

- Gather and share with students examples of fluent writing; especially look for poetry. Ask: Does the listener sense the ease and flow of the language? Are transitions smooth? Do the sentence beginnings and structures vary? How does the use of punctuation affect fluency?
- Have students select a piece of their own writing, then underline or highlight the first three words of each sentence. Ask: What do you observe? Do sentences begin in the same way? Is there variety of beginning words and sentence structures? What transitions would add variety without overloading sentence beginnings?
- Use choral readings, oral interpretation and drama to give students the experience of hearing the flow of language. Again, select poetry as the focus of instruction in fluency.
- Have students use their own writing to revise for fluency paying attention to varying sentence beginnings, using effective transitions, correcting punctuation to make writing smooth and easy to read.
Conventions

Conventions are the mechanical correctness of the piece, which include spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, capitalization, and punctuation.

- Model and guide student practice in clarifying the distinction between revising and editing. In revising for the five traits of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency, the writer may add, delete or combine ideas, reorder details, insert more descriptive language, or eliminate short, choppy sentences. In editing for conventions, the writer proofreads for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and capitalization.

- Use a piece of your own writing to model personal editing problems using copy editor’s symbols (e.g.; sp—misspelling of certain word/s, sv—confusion over subject/verb agreement).

- Create with students a copy editor’s set of symbols. Post in the classroom: duplicate for individual use.

- Model and guide students’ practice in proofreading various texts with an editor’s eye using symbols to designate corrections.

- Create mini lessons that demonstrate a particular convention or usage problem identified from analyzing student work. Work on one editing problem at a time, asking students what they feel needs improvement.

- Have students take control of personal editing problems in their own writing, assuming responsibility for eliminating these errors in future writings. Have students develop an individual checklist of editing skills.

- Have students keep a running list titled “Editing Errors to Watch for...“ in their notebooks or journals.
Presentation

*Presentation combines both visual and verbal elements. It is the way we “exhibit” our message.*

- Collect pieces of writing from weak to strong in the trait of presentation. Ask: What makes writing clean? Readable? How does handwriting affect presentation? Is there a good use of white space and margins? Is there balance of text and visuals?
- Model methods that increase readability, e.g., use of fonts, subheadings, pagination, and visuals such as charts and diagrams.
- Model and guide practice in use of the computer and computer tools: spell checker, use of bullets, various fonts, pagination, headers and footers.
- Model and guide practice in creating a multimedia presentation on a curriculum topic. Include pertinent graphics as support. (e.g., timeline, video clip, audio clip). Pay attention to design principles:
  - **Alignment**—connect ideas or objects on a page to create a clean, interesting, fresh look.
  - **Proximity**—group ideas and visuals that go together to help organize information and reduce confusion.
  - **Repetition**—repeat the design (color, shape, texture, graphics, fonts) throughout the piece to help with organization and eye appeal.
  - **Contrast**—change the font, size, style, when necessary to help the reader comprehend the message. Limit a document to two fonts.
- Demonstrate what “electronic privacy rights” means and how it impacts a presentation. Share instances of how privacy rights have been violated.
- Select famous photojournalist’s images and discuss what makes each memorable and compelling. What is the emotional effect of the photograph?
- Share with students the front pages of two different newspapers. Discuss similarities and differences. Ask students to pay attention to the use of headlines and photographs and how they enhance or detract from the text.
- Model and guide practice in creating interview questions. Develop with students a series of human-interest questions to be used in an interview. Model how to create a biographical sketch of the person being interviewed. Demonstrate how this information can be shared either in a hard copy or slide show.
- Model how to design and create a travel brochure. The brochure should inform, educate or persuade the reader.
- Model and guide practice in researching information on relevant Web sites that address a focus question. Expect students to report the findings to the class or small group. Add the sites to a set of classroom recommended Web sites. Give students clear guidelines when using the Internet. *(Refer to Inquiry and Research—Gathering Resources)*
Genre Study

Genre describes particular types of writing organized by structure, technique, purpose or content. Biography is a genre; science fiction is a genre; essay and poetry are both genres. Students learn to match their purpose for writing to the appropriate genre.

What are the genres taught in middle school?

Teachers need to remember that students will do many kinds of writing during the middle school years, and only some pieces of writing will go through the entire writing process.

Expressive
- Personal Journals, Memoir
- Notebooks
- Learning Logs
- Friendly Letters/Emails
- Personal Responses to Literature

Informative
- Character Sketch
- Field Notes
- Magazine/Newspaper Article
- Interview
- Biography/Autobiography
- Explanations, Directions, Problem-Solving (how)
- Essay (cause/effect, compare/contrast)
- Research/Inquiry

Persuasive
- Literary Analysis
- Editorial
- Position Paper
- Essays (cause/effect, compare/contrast)

Imaginative/literary
- Play/Skit
- Short Story
- Fables/Folktales
- Poetry
- Novel
- Science Fiction
- Fantasy
- Mystery

Functional
- Advertisement
- Brochure
- Business Letter
- Invitation
- List
- Memo
- Note-Taking
- E-mail

“For me, a priority in teaching about genre is to introduce or require only genres found in the real world of literature—kinds of writing that a reader can locate in a reasonably good book store or library.”

-Nancie Atwell
Lessons that Change Writers
**IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- Introduce a variety of genres through read alouds first.
- Fill classrooms with a wide range of texts so that students have the opportunity to independently read in depth in genres that interest them.
- Students learn how to select appropriate forms for writing and purpose based on broad exposure to genre and authors.
- Instruction should integrate reading and writing so that students learn to write and gain confidence using different genres.

**CLASSROOM PRACTICES**

- Refer to standards for your grade level to identify genres (e.g., biography, poetry) for in-depth study throughout the year.
- Read aloud a variety of texts from a specific genre.
- Analyze texts within a genre for specific genre characteristics. Teach students significant vocabulary for identifying the characteristics of a genre, e.g.,
  - Fiction—plot, setting, protagonist, etc.
  - Biography/autobiography—memoir, flashback, etc.
  - Newspaper articles—title, lead, pull quotes, etc.
  - Persuasive essay—assertion, rebuttal, counter argument, etc.
  - Poetry—figurative language, metaphor, similes, alliterations, assonance, etc.
  - Fantasy—plot, quest/journey, etc.
- Create opportunities for students to read in a variety of genres.
  - Investigate with students how a writer’s purpose and audience determines the genre they use.
  - Teach students specific strategies for reading particular genres (e.g., when teaching mysteries, predict, search for character motifs, false clues, foreshadowing).
- Create opportunities for students to write in a variety of genres.
- Connect genre study to standards and content area study whenever possible. For instance, relate the following:
  - Biography and history or science
  - Persuasive essay and social studies
  - Poetry and music
  - Note taking and math
**Writer’s Craft**

*Writer’s craft* describes the way writers work. Noting habits and behaviors of writers is one level of studying craft. The other level includes how writers think and imagine, how they write and refine a piece, and how they develop the characteristics of good writing. To improve their own writing, students need to learn what writers do when they shape their texts.

**Important Considerations**

- Teachers need to have personal experience writing in the genres they will teach. Finding time to write may seem impossible, but this is some of the most important curriculum work you can do. Having personal experience in the genre leads you to teach from experience, writer to writer.

- Effective writing teachers recognize how their writing process changes according to genre, purpose and audience. In effect, they are metacognitive about their writing and are able to share their thinking with students.

- Students need to read widely. When students first experience text, they do so as a reader. For example, they may connect to the characters, an exciting plot or new information about a topic. They then revisit the text as a writer. At this point they ask, “How did the author do that?”

- Teachers and students need to be constantly alert for text that can serve as models for good writing.

- Published writers provide teachers and students with an opportunity to examine professionals’ writing in a variety of fields.

- The study of writer’s craft takes time and practice. Some elements of craft involve familiar terms, such as “plot” or “character”; others introduce new language such as “alliteration” or “assonance.”

- The study of writer’s craft involves engaging students in discovering the elements of that craft and becoming comfortable with using the terminology of those elements in their own academic discourse.
Classroom Practices

Craft lessons focus on a single aspect of writing with clearly defined examples gathered from published authors, teachers and students.

Provide opportunities for students to read like writers. In Wondrous Words, Katie Wood Ray recommends modeling the following protocol:

- Notice one element about the craft of the text.
- Talk about and speculate why the writer might have used this craft.
- Determine whether you have seen this element of craft before in other text.
- Discuss what you could name this element of craft (to aid memory retrieval and the social construction of knowledge with other writers).
- Envision using this element in your own writing.

Compile and share writers’ Web sites.

Introduce new genres by providing opportunities for students to become acquainted with reading the genre before writing it. As a class, discover the characteristics of the genre and create a graphic organizer of its features.

Teach students to approach revision as a time for reflection. Model asking questions such as:

- Did I achieve my purpose in this writing? If not, what do I need to change or add?
- Will the piece have the effect I intended? If not, how can I improve it?

Discuss how writers have their own individual ways to edit. Model what you and other writers do when you edit. Be specific about the non-negotiable aspects of editing, for example, attending to grammar rules and mechanics.

Ask students to share their writing successes and struggles. Create opportunities for students to explain their writing decisions. These discussions will establish a number of students as writing experts, in addition to you, the teacher.

Share books and articles in which writers write about writing. Pay particular attention to and discuss their work habits and how authors navigate the writing process.

Teach students how to reread their own writing in order to craft and revise — reading small parts, reviewing sentence openings, checking for active verbs, reading for a particular aspect of craft.

“When readers begin to think like writers, and writers begin to write with readers in mind, the lines that separate the teaching of reading and writing disappear.”

— Janet Allen
Yellow Brick Roads
What are some examples of craft mini lessons?

- Share ways writers revise for word choice.
- Examine text structure examples:
  - Circular text (beginning and ending match)
  - Text with thread backs (re-mentioning many details of the text, in a single sentence at the end)
  - Framing-Question Texts (the text structure works from a central question at the beginning of the piece)
- Share word-level craft study:
  - Close-echo effect (key words are repeated instead of using a conjunction, “There is no friend that is so kind, so nice, so thoughtful.”)
  - Striking verbs or adjectives (adjectives or verbs used in unique ways, “…the boy was drowning in his clothes”)
- Add details of setting to a scene as if you had the perspective of a camera lens or were looking at a snapshot.
- Experiment with openings: use flashback, dialogue, start in the middle of the action.
- Experiment with symbolism.
- Examine authors’ use of flashback or time transitions to move the story forward.
- Use interior monologue as a technique which reveals internal conflict.
- Cut what is not necessary.
- Vary sentence length.
- Describe a character through gesture.
- Summarize information.
How do I create independent writers?

**Modeled Writing**

In *modeled writing*, the teacher demonstrates what a good writer does by writing and thinking aloud in front of a group of students. The teacher bases teaching points on analysis of student writing and the development of writing skills. A modeled writing can become a shared writing; the two can blend.

**Shared Writing**

In a *shared writing*, the teacher and students collaborate by discussing and composing messages. The teacher does the writing and guides the process to construct a text that deepens understanding of author's craft and the 6 + 1 Traits®.

**Guided Writing**

In *guided writing*, the teacher meets with a small, temporary group of students with common needs. Guided writing groups meet or confer for personalized attention. These can take place during independent writing time.

**Independent Writing**

In *independent writing*, students work individually on their own writing focusing on self-selected or assigned topics. During this time the teacher meets with guided writing groups, confers with individual students or circulates to support and address students' needs.

“Writing teachers draw upon three distinct areas of expertise. We must know our students, how to teach and we must know something about writing itself.”

– Ralph Fletcher

*What a Writer Needs*
**Modeled Writing**

In *modeled writing*, the teacher demonstrates what a good writer does by writing and thinking aloud in front of a group of students. The teacher bases teaching points on analysis of student writing and the development of writing skills. A modeled writing can become a shared writing; the two can blend.

**Shared Writing**

In a *shared writing*, the teacher and students collaborate by discussing and composing messages. The teacher does the writing and guides the process to construct a text that deepens understanding of author’s craft and the *6 + 1 Traits®*. 
The Value of Modeled and Shared Writing

- Allows teacher and students to write about a common experience and allows students to learn from each other.
- Makes visible for students the cognitive strategies of planning, decision-making, problem-solving, weighing options, etc.
- Affords students practice in different forms of writing.
- Provides less-experienced writers the opportunity to learn from more skilled writers.
- Allows the teacher to address specific student needs and teaching points.

The “How To” of Modeled and Shared Writing

1. Begin with assessment based on observation and assessment of student writing samples.

2. Establish a purpose for the lesson:
   - Consider standards, student writing samples, 6 + 1 Traits®, genres, or writer’s craft as a focus for the mini lesson.
   - Determine the single most accelerative teaching point for the whole class or a flexible group.
   - Determine a purpose: to build declarative knowledge of what real writers do; procedural knowledge of how to engage in writer’s behaviors; conditional knowledge of when to apply certain strategies and why strategies are effective.

3. Demonstrate the teaching point.
   - Use text large enough for all to see (overhead, digital projector, chart paper, etc.).
   - Think aloud as you write to reveal your thinking process to students.
   - Specifically model the selected one or two new teaching points.
   - When appropriate, model prior teaching points as quick reminders.
   - Limit modeled and shared writing to 5 to 10 minutes.
   - Ask students to summarize the most important learnings from the lesson.
   - Provide time for students to write.
Guided Writing

In **guided writing**, the teacher meets with a small, temporary group of students with common needs. Guided writing groups meet or confer for personalized attention. These can take place during independent writing time.

“The teacher may encounter a student whose writing differs dramatically from the teacher’s idea of excellent writing. A true mentor will not try to penalize the student or clone a duplicate of himself. Rather, the mentor is forever alive to the possibility of something new and distinctly original.”

—Ralph Fletcher
*What a Writer Needs*

**The Value of Guided Writing**

- Offers the opportunity for specifically naming student strengths.
- Facilitates ongoing teaching by assessing students’ work in progress.
- Allows for addressing common needs within group instruction.
- Fosters cooperation and peer revision as students learn from each other.
- Provides opportunity for one-on-one modeling, feedback, and explicit instruction between teacher and student.
The “How To” of Guided Writing

1) Assess students’ writing samples to identify strengths and needs.

2) Use analysis information to determine flexible groups and most accelerative, powerful teaching points. Keep looking for opportunities to heterogeneously group students.

3) State explicitly to the students the reason for a small-group meeting: “Let’s look at...” (e.g. how writers come up with ideas; how paragraphing clarifies ideas; how to “show instead of tell”; how to combine sentences and avoid choppy writing).

4) Hold short and focused guided writing sessions 10 to 15 minutes in length. At the end of the lesson, students summarize what they have learned.

5) Provide time for students to practice during or following the lesson.

6) Observe students’ understandings and plan for appropriate level of support.
Independent Writing

In independent writing, students work individually on their own writing focusing on self-selected or assigned topics. During this time the teacher meets with guided writing groups, confers with individual students or circulates to support and address students’ needs.

The Value of Independent Writing

During independent writing, students:

- Become more fluent, proficient and confident as they have time and opportunity to work as writers.
- Select topics of personal interest and significance.
- Gain independence and ownership.
- Internalize the writing process.
- Reflect upon their own work as writers.
- Choose to display their published writings as models for others.

“We know that learning will be taking place all the time as students are writing and thinking and talking about writing during independent work and share times. The teaching we do surrounds that active learning and is meant to push it and support it in important ways.”

– Katie Wood Ray
The Writing Workshop
The “How To” of Independent Writing

1) Begin independent writing with a status of the class. (Status of the class is a quick survey to determine what each student will be working on during this time.)

2) Give students significant uninterrupted time for writing three to five times a week.

3) Observe, confer with individual students or teach guided writing groups during independent writing.

4) Conclude with students discussing, sharing, reflecting upon and evaluating their written work.
How do I help my struggling adolescent writers?

Important Considerations

✍ Reflect on your own expectations for struggling writers.

• Can you specifically name strengths each student brings to writing. The strengths may be as simple as being interested in a topic.
• After a period of instruction, do you see different strengths? If not, develop specific teaching points for progress you expect in three weeks. Work with the student on establishing and reaching that goal.

✍ Model how all writers struggle with their writing. To encourage students to undertake this challenge, let them observe you at work as a writer.

✍ Practice and model writing the genres you are asking students to write. In writing in the genre yourself, you can speak writer-to-writer.

✍ Be sure that the purpose for writing is meaningful to students. All students, but especially those who struggle as writers, need to value writing something that is challenging and worthwhile.

✍ Listen for students’ voices in oral language. Record things they say well, and encourage students to use this language in their writing. Struggling writers usually speak more clearly and eloquently than they write. They need to understand the link between spoken and written language.

✍ Analyze students’ writing using the 6 + 1 Traits® rubric to determine their strengths and needs. Does the writing contain: a clear focus, a logical sequencing, unique voice, precise word choice, sentence variety, correct mechanics and grammar, and appropriate presentation features.

✍ After modeling, ask students to analyze their own and their peers’ writing using the 6 + 1 Traits® rubric. Focus on one or two traits at a time.

✍ Encourage students who have spelling difficulties to realize that initial drafts frequently contain errors. Some students struggle in writing because they will only write words they know they can spell correctly. Their writing is simple, restricted, and predictable. Make it clear that a draft is a draft—a place for getting down ideas and that spelling does not need to be correct until the piece is ready for an audience.

✍ Identify explicit teaching points in guided writing that address students’ needs. Meet often with your struggling writers for short check-ins. Designate time for struggling writers to simply write on their own. To help students develop independence in writing, set clear expectations about the task. Establish a routine whereby students know you will be checking back (not as a “drill sergeant,” but as an interested reader) to see what is happening in their writing.
In conversations with the students, ask large questions such as, “How do you want readers to feel about your topic?” Be interested in what students are writing, but more importantly, track their growth as writers. Give feedback to students that includes both praise and specific suggestions. Tell students to do this same thing for one another in their peer conferences.

Classroom Practices

Design instruction which links reading and writing. Actively engage struggling writers to simultaneously keep the reading and writing processes in mind.

Provide opportunities which access the same set of cognitive strategies—planning, setting goals, using prior knowledge, making connections, revising thinking, reflecting and evaluating.

Model and guide students through demonstrations of the writing process steps. Study genres and writers’ craft to use as exemplars for students’ own writing. Revise writing with 6 + 1 Traits® in mind. Edit a final copy.

Provide time for students to share their writing in small groups or with the whole class so students get ideas from each other.

Have students keep a portfolio of their work. As the year progresses, ask the students to analyze their writing for:

- An example of a favorite genre.
- Growth in their writing over time.
- New learnings about themselves as writers.
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION
Wisconsin Standard C: Students in Wisconsin will listen to understand and will speak clearly and effectively for diverse purposes. Students in Wisconsin will apply their knowledge of the nature, grammar, and variations of American English.

Performance Standards: By the end of grade Eight, students will:

- Orally communicate information, opinions, and ideas effectively to different audiences for a variety of purposes.
- Share brief impromptu remarks about topics of interest to oneself and others
- Speaking from notes or an outline, relate an experience in descriptive detail, with a sense of timing and decorum appropriate to the occasion
- Perform expressive oral readings of prose, poetry, and drama
- Prepare and conduct interviews
- Present a coherent, comprehensive report on differing viewpoints on an issue, evaluating the content of the material presented, and organizing the presentation in a manner appropriate to the audience
- Differentiate between formal and informal contexts and employ an appropriate style of speaking, adjusting language, gestures, rate, and volume according to audience and purpose
- Observe the appropriate etiquette when expressing thanks and receiving praise

Listen to and comprehend oral communications.
- Summarize and explain the information conveyed in an oral communication, accounting for the key ideas, structure, and relationship of parts to the whole
- Distinguish among purposes for listening, such as gaining information or being entertained, and take notes as appropriate
- Recall significant details and sequence accurately
- Follow a speaker’s argument and represent it in notes
- Evaluate the reliability of information in a communication, using criteria based on prior knowledge of the speaker, the topic, and the context and on analysis of logic, evidence, propaganda devices, and language

Participate effectively in discussion.
- Participate in discussion by listening attentively, demonstrating respect for the opinions of others, and responding responsibly and courteously to the remarks of others
- Explain and advance opinions by citing evidence and referring to sources
- Evaluate the stated ideas and opinions of others, seeking clarification through questions
- Invite ideas and opinions of others into the discussion, responding clearly and tactfully to questions and comments
- Accept and use helpful criticism
- Establish and maintain an open mind when listening to others' ideas and opinions
- Summarize the main points of a discussion, orally, and in writing, specifying areas of agreement and disagreement and paraphrasing contributions
- Display and maintain facial expressions, body language, and other response cues that indicate respect for the speaker and attention to the discussion
- Attend to the content of discussion rather than the speaker
- Participate in discussion without dominating
- Distinguish between supported and unsupported statements
Develop their vocabulary and ability to use words, phrases, idioms, and various grammatical structures as a means of improving communication.

- Consult dictionaries, thesauruses, handbooks, and grammar texts when choosing words, phrases, and expressions for use in oral and written presentations
- Explain how writers and speakers choose words and use figurative language such as similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, and allusion to achieve specific effects
- Choose words purposefully and evaluate the use of words in communications designed to inform, explain, and persuade

Recognize and interpret various uses and adaptations of language in social, cultural, regional, and professional situations, and learn to be flexible and responsive in their use of English.

- Describe how American English is used in various public and private contexts, such as school, home, and work
- Make appropriate choices when speaking and writing, such as formal or informal language, considering the purpose and context of the communication
- Evaluate how audience and context affect the selection and use of words and phrases, including technical terms, slang, and jargon

**MMSD Grade Level Performance Standards: The students will**

**Grade Six**

*Use effective language in formal and informal situations (e.g., speeches, debates, reports, discussions):*

- Differentiate between formal and informal contexts and employ an appropriate style of speaking, adjusting language, gesture, rate, and volume according to audience and purpose
- Distinguish among purposes for listening, such as gaining information or being entertained

*Analyze oral participation in small-group activities:*

- Communicate as leader and contributor
- Participate in discussion by listening attentively, demonstrating respect for the opinions of others, and responding responsibly and courteously to the remarks of others
- Accept and use helpful criticism
- Evaluate own contributions to discussions
- Summarize and evaluate group activities
- Analyze the effectiveness of participant interactions

*Listen critically and express opinions in oral presentations:*

- Distinguish between fact and opinions
- Compare and contrast points of view
- Present a convincing argument
- Give feedback about content, organization, and overall effect

*Identify persuasive techniques:*

- Recognize how messages are adjusted for different audiences
- Identify sales approaches and techniques aimed at children
Grade Seven

Give and seek information in conversations and in group discussions:

☐ use vocabulary and style appropriate for audience
☐ use standard English and conventions
☐ communicate ideas and information orally in an organized and succinct manner
☐ ask probing questions to seek elaboration and clarification of ideas
☐ make supportive statements to communicate agreement or acceptance of others’ ideas
☐ explain and advance opinions by citing evidence and referring to sources
☐ participate in discussion without dominating
☐ summarize main points before or after presentations
☐ identify effect of exaggeration on audience

Evaluate the effectiveness or a speaker’s verbal and nonverbal messages:

☐ evaluate verbal communication skills, such as word choice, pitch, feeling, tone, and voice
☐ evaluate nonverbal communication skills, such as eye contact, posture, and gestures
☐ compare/contrast a speaker’s verbal and nonverbal messages
☐ distinguish between supported and unsupported statements

Analyze persuasive messages in print and nonprint media, including television, radio, and film:

☐ critically view nonprint media
☐ articulate reasons for selecting particular television and radio productions and rejecting others
☐ identify advertising strategies and techniques aimed at teenagers
☐ describe the possible cause/effect relationships between mass media coverage and public opinion trends
☐ evaluate advertisements, editorials, and feature stories for relationships between intent and factual content

Grade Eight

Communicate information, opinions, and ideas effectively to different audiences for a variety of purposes:

☐ use various resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses, and grammar texts to refine language choices
☐ choose words purposefully and evaluate the use of words in communication designed to inform, explain, and persuade
☐ demonstrate awareness of how the use of language is affected by community, culture, and audience

Listen to and comprehend oral communication:

☐ evaluate the stated ideas and opinions of others, seeking clarification through questions
☐ display and maintain facial expressions, body language, and other response cues that indicate respect for the speaker and attention to the discussion

Evaluate the reliability of information in various types of communication, using criteria based on prior knowledge of the speaker, the topic, and the context, and on analysis of logic, evidence, propaganda devices, and language.

Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for English Language Arts
Grade Level Performance Standards, Madison Metropolitan School District
Oral Communication

What are the types of oral communication?

1. Expressive
   ...communications that express and respond to feelings and attitudes (e.g., exclaiming, empathizing, praising, criticizing and rejecting)

2. Ritualizing/Formulaic
   ...communications that primarily facilitate social interaction and maintain social relationships (e.g., greeting, taking leave, making and responding to introductions, reciting, participating in situationally appropriate speech, requesting to repeat)

3. Imaginative
   ...communications where participants are cast in imaginary situations (e.g., role playing, creating fantasies, speculating, dramatizing, theorizing, storytelling)

4. Informative
   ...communications where participants offer or seek information (e.g., stating information, questioning, answering, justifying, naming, pointing out, demonstrating, explaining, acknowledging)

5. Persuasive
   ...communications that are primarily designed to change or control behavior (e.g., commanding, ordering, suggesting, permitting, threatening, warning, prohibiting, contracting, refusing, bargaining, rejecting, persuading, justifying, arguing)

Why teach oral communication?

Oral communication is taught so students learn to speak, listen and interact in social, academic and work communities. Every lesson provides the opportunity to teach students the appropriate discourse of the content area and is most effective when the learning experiences are authentic.
How is oral language infused into the middle school curriculum?

The following are examples of various types of classroom activities that promote oral communication skills:

- Discussion about literature in literature circles
- Oral interpretation activities
- Debates
- Panel discussions
- Interviews
- Public speaking
- Large and small group discussion
- Partner sharing
- Reports
- Role-playing
- Creative dramatics
  - Performance of dramatic literature
  - Oral interpretation of literature
  - Story telling and folktales (interpretation and retelling)
  - Reader’s Theater

What is active listening?

Listening is largely cognitive and psychological, whereas hearing is physiological. Successful listeners know how to do these things:

1. Perceive and recognize verbal and nonverbal cues.
2. Respond to verbal and nonverbal cues.
3. Assign meaning to the verbal and nonverbal cues.
4. Evaluate the message.
5. Respond to the speaker to provide feedback.
6. Assign meaning to remember a message.
7. Provide feedback to the speaker.
8. Listen with an intent to remember.
**Why teach Listening?**

Teach listening so that students can:

- Recognize the purpose for communication (expressing feelings, envisioning, informing).
- Recognize the purpose for listening (gathering information, assessing the feelings of others, analyzing the intent).
- Use verbal and nonverbal cues.
- Comprehend and remember important messages.
- Understand and follow oral instructions.
- Evaluate messages.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Learn to respect one another’s freedom of speech.
- Participate more effectively in verbal communication.
- Limit *non sequiturs*.

**How do I create an effective climate for listening?**

The following elements foster an effective climate for listening:

- Prompt student readiness for listening with verbal and visual cues.
- Present only once assignments or directions.
- Verbalize information clearly with proper volume.
- Encourage active listening in order to create a classroom community of learners.
- Teach students to pay close attention to speakers, using both eyes and ears.
- Set expectations for respecting cultural differences.
- Teach students how to summarize someone else’s position on a controversial subject.
- Address disagreements respectfully and thoughtfully.
- Teach students to effectively take notes from oral presentations.
- Model and promote students’ use of appropriate feedback.
How do I assess skills in oral language?

Grade 8 Oral Communication Rubric

C.8.1 Orally communicate information, opinions, and ideas effectively to different audiences for a variety of purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advanced 4</th>
<th>Proficient 3</th>
<th>Basic 2</th>
<th>Minimal 1</th>
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</table>

**When participating in a wide range of speaking activities, the student:**

- **Advanced 4:** Adapts presentation for audience and purpose: speaks fluidly, naturally, and precisely with appropriate level of diction; uses appropriate and effective gestures; maintains eye contact; arouses and compels interest; considers listeners’ background, knowledge, beliefs, and interests
- **Proficient 3:** Adapts presentation for audience and purpose: usually speaks clearly and audibly; gestures naturally; avoids clumsy pauses; avoids “ah, uhm,” and other fillers; usually controls level of diction; maintains eye contact; considers listeners’ knowledge and interests
- **Basic 2:** Frequently has difficulty adapting presentation for audience and purpose: often forgets to vary volume, pacing, gestures; has difficulty matching level of diction with purpose; uses “ah, uhm,” and other fillers; pauses awkwardly; seems uncomfortable maintaining eye contact
- **Minimal 1:** Displays little ability to engage audience or to adapt presentation for purpose: speaks inaudibly; enunciates poorly; mispronounces; distracts listeners with “ah, uhm,” and other fillers; pauses and moves awkwardly; seldom makes eye contact

- **Advanced 4:** Uses varied, effective, and sometimes creative organizational and transitional strategies
- **Proficient 3:** Uses clear organizational and transitional strategies; recovers train of thought if briefly lost
- **Basic 2:** Creates an organizational plan, but has difficulty staying with it; states a topic, but rambles or jumps back and forth in a confusing way
- **Minimal 1:** Frequently seems confused and unable to articulate or follow a clear sequence; often loses train of thought

- **Advanced 4:** Selects, evaluates, and incorporates source material with audience in mind
- **Proficient 3:** Finds and clearly presents relevant source material
- **Basic 2:** Has difficulty finding and clearly presenting relevant source material
- **Minimal 1:** Often fails to find relevant source material; lacks purpose in selecting sources

- **Advanced 4:** Reads aloud from varied materials with expression, clarity, and appropriate feeling
- **Proficient 3:** Reads aloud from varied materials clearly and with understanding
- **Basic 2:** Reads hesitantly; sometimes loses the thread of understanding
- **Minimal 1:** Reads aloud with minimal understanding; frequently hesitates

*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*
**Accountable Talk**

**What is Accountable Talk?**

*Accountable Talk* is a framework for discussion created by the Institute for Learning, University of Pittsburgh. Promoting rigorous thinking is a primary goal of the framework. Accountable Talk requires students to use academic discourse to advance discussion with accurate, relevant knowledge and questions. The framework establishes norms of sound reasoning and learning engagement.

**What is the value of Accountable Talk?**

- Establishes student responsibility for building upon and responding to one another’s ideas.
- Models appropriate forms of discussion.
- Presses for clarification and explanation.
- Requires justifications of proposals and challenges.
- Recognizes and challenges misconceptions.
- Demands evidence for claims and arguments.
- Interprets and “revoices” students’ statements.

**What are discussion stems for Accountable Talk?**

1. I would like to build on what Maria said...
2. I have two things to add...
3. Let me see if I understood what you meant.
4. I would like to disagree with...
5. I have a different idea about that...
6. Here in the text it says...
7. Could someone help me understand that?
8. The author’s central point seemed to be...
9. Another way to think about that is...
10. I got this idea from the article we read last week.
11. I want to add on to...
12. I want to push back a little bit about that.
13. Where did you see that idea in the chapter?
14. I’m having trouble understanding that point.
15. Let’s take this discussion in a slightly different direction.
16. I combined ideas from both articles, and I’d like to suggest...
17. Let’s look at the data to check that out.
What is language study?

Students need to become more aware of language in general and how it varies, changes and “works” in their worlds. The study of language in the language arts curriculum has traditionally emphasized formal grammar, vocabulary and spelling. However, developing a more complete language study curriculum that recognizes, appreciates, explores, and studies varieties of American English is important. Consider the following:

- Who is using language?
- What kinds of language are they using?
- Where are they using language?
- When are they using language?
- Why are they using language?

What linguistic skills and knowledge do adolescents develop in middle school?

Middle school students learn to:

- Discern the differences between spoken and written language.
- Acquire control of conjunctions and relative pronouns to construct syntactically complex sentences.
- Expand and increase vocabulary in reading, writing, and speaking.
- Increase conceptual thinking and use of abstract vocabulary.
- Use figurative language.
- Develop their own language expressions.
- Learn conventions for communicating in different contexts.
- Consciously think about and use language.
- Adapt language to context, purpose and audience using the appropriate discourse.

“Teachers can enhance students’ language comprehension by monitoring their own classroom discourse for clarity, pacing, and word choice.”

—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Planning Curriculum in English Language Arts

“Teachers can enhance students’ language comprehension by monitoring their own classroom discourse for clarity, pacing, and word choice.”

—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Planning Curriculum in English Language Arts
How do I create an effective climate for language study?

**Classroom Practices**

- Use normal rhythm and pacing.
- Use complete sentences.
- Model a variety of sentence structures (simple, compound, complex).
- Avoid using condensed sentences (e.g., doyawanago?).
- Paraphrase and summarize.
- Use examples (graphic organizers, visual aids) to illustrate meaning.
- Use gestures.
- Use more specific nouns in place of pronouns.
- Explain idioms as needed.
- Use synonyms to extend vocabulary development.
- Use a rich context when introducing vocabulary.
- Model metacognition, consciously choosing specific language to make the invisible thinking process visible.
- Allow for more “wait time” between question and answer.

“A complete language study curriculum helps students to explore and practice the varieties of American English in the context of people using language purposefully.”

—Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Planning Curriculum in English Language Arts
How do I teach language study?

The language students use in their everyday lives provides the greatest resource for teaching language study. Instructional planning should include a rich, interactive environment that honors and extends students’ linguistic choices and proficiencies.

In language study, students will:

- Explore how language is used in a variety of contexts: at home, in school, with friends.
- Adapt language to context, purpose and audience.
- Select words purposefully and evaluate word usage when informing, explaining, and persuading.
- Use dictionaries and thesauruses to select precise words, phrases and expressions in oral and written presentations.
- Experience a stimulating environment that challenges them to communicate clearly to peers, teachers and other adults.
- Evaluate the concept of how audience and purpose affect the author’s choice of words and phrases (e.g., technical terms, slang, and jargon).
- Read and listen to a variety of multicultural books and stories that reflect language variations.
- Develop spelling and vocabulary in order to use the appropriate academic discourse across curricular areas.
- Understand how writers and speakers use similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, and allusions for specific effects.
- Learn grammar in the context of revising and editing one’s own and other students’ writing.
Grammar is the study of the structure of a language, including syntactic structures and patterns and “rules.”

**Traditional Grammar vs. Modern Grammars**

Traditional grammar focuses on identifying and labeling parts of a sentence (e.g., nouns, verbs, phrases, clauses). Traditional grammar is prescriptive and aims to teach rules and then use these rules to make correct sentences. This method helps to analyze sentences, not create them.

Modern grammars attempt to describe the language students use rather than prescribe sentences considered “correct.” Modern grammars are descriptive rather than prescriptive. The importance of using conventions is not discounted, but distinctions are made between grammar and conventions of usage. Modern grammars describe how the language is structured and its many variations.

**Important Considerations**

- Standard English (mainstream dialect) is key to communication in many workplaces, public and academic contexts.
- Grammar instruction has customarily been linked to teaching students to speak and write correctly. Teach grammar in the context of what students are writing.
- Provide students with the specialized grammatical terms to help students talk about writing in a technical way.
- Make students aware of their own understanding of syntax in oral and written communication to help them understand sentence construction.
- Our teaching needs to be efficient and effective, encouraging student experimentation and risk-taking in writing.
- Instructional planning needs to provide time for students to create discourse as well as analyze exemplars in writing.
- To teach grammar in isolation may be detrimental to students’ writing skills, while teaching grammar in context of the writer’s craft is productive.
- Grammar instruction is most productive when students are drafting and revising their own writing.
Students should learn mechanics in context at the editing stage.

Usage is the way in which a native language or dialect is actually applied.

Students can learn how to manipulate and control their own language.

Classroom Practices

- Focus lessons on students’ needs.
- Have students revise and edit writing based on grammatical needs.
- Base teaching points on analyzing patterns of errors in students’ writing.
- Develop grammatical concepts of sentence sense through activities that may include modeling of specific sentence structures, sentence combining, sentence expanding, adding or deleting ideas.
- Revise writing for various audiences and purposes, adapting the language accordingly.
- Recognize conventions as essential for the reader to make sense of text.
- Examine student writing for knowledge about sound-letter relationships, high-frequency words, spelling patterns, generalized spelling rules, homophones, and problem-solving strategies.

Minimum Grammar for Maximum Benefits

Five Key Concepts

1. Teach concepts of subject, verb, sentence, clause, phrase, and related concepts for revision.
2. Teach style through sentence combining and sentence generating.
3. Teach sentence sense and style by manipulating elements of syntax.
4. Teach the power of dialect and the dialects of power.
5. Teach punctuation and mechanics for conventions, clarity, and style.

Spelling is the representation of sounds with letters, the code by which we record the spoken language. It is a developmental process that involves the discovery of sound and meaning patterns.

**Important Considerations**

- Spelling is learned best in the context of reading and writing.
- Spelling errors are not random, but demonstrate students’ levels of knowledge about the English spelling system.
- Teachers and researchers who have developed successful spelling instruction note that spelling is best supported through reading.
- Design instruction which develops a solid repertoire of spelling strategies in the context of literacy activities.
- A good reader is not automatically a good speller.
- A student may know the word, but not possess the visual memory for exact replication of the word.
- Identify the spelling strategies that students need to learn and teach these strategies in flexible groups of students.
- Spelling inventories provide assessment information on students’ stages of development to help focus instruction.
- Hold students accountable for spelling when editing their own writing.

**Classroom Practices**

- Model and guide practice in how to proofread a final draft for correct spelling.
- Teach students to use “possible spellings” to locate troublesome words in the dictionary.
- Use software spellcheckers and at the same time recognize the spellcheckers will not “catch” homophones and other misspellings that may be actual words.
- Engage students in comparing, contrasting, sorting, and classifying words.
- Encourage students to use spelling lists in their writing.

“...an individual’s knowledge of word structure or orthographic knowledge has broader applications. It underlies efficient and automatic generation of words during the writing process as well as efficient and automatic perception of words during the reading process. Conceptualized in these terms, spelling and the development of underlying orthographic knowledge thus assume greater importance and wider application across the language arts.”

— Templeton and Morris

Words Their Way
★ Game-like formats such as board games and card games reinforce memory for words and spelling patterns.

★ Develop with students a core list of frequently misspelled, troublesome words. Encourage students to add a few self-selected words based on particular interest.

★ Examine students' writing to determine their appropriate developmental level for spelling and word study:
  - □ Alphabetic spelling (flot-float; plas-place)
  - □ Within-word pattern spelling (flote-float; plais-place)
  - □ Syllables and affixes spelling (seller for cellar, shoping for shopping, confedent for confident)
  - □ Derivational relations spelling (benafit for benefit, appearence for appearance, acomodate for accommodate)

★ Focus learning on the synchrony among reading, writing, and spelling development (Figure 7): development in one area relates to development in other areas.

Figure 7

Vocabulary is knowledge of words and word meanings. As a student’s conceptual thinking becomes more complex, that student’s vocabulary expands and becomes more abstract. Students’ reading, listening, writing, and speaking are all meaningful avenues for vocabulary development.

Important Considerations

- Students need to approach vocabulary learning as users of language. Vocabulary learning goes far beyond establishing definitions. Instead, students need to develop confidence using the new vocabulary in their writing and speaking.
- Vocabulary study should recognize that people use vocabulary in four communication modes: reading and listening, speaking and writing. For students to “own” a new word, that word needs to be represented in all four vocabularies.
- Students learn most new vocabulary incidentally through oral language experiences and wide reading.
- Vocabulary learning is recursive, and repeated exposures in new contexts solidify deeper understandings of a word.
- To increase word knowledge, students must read texts of various genres and levels of difficulty for different purposes.
- Students need to participate daily in oral language activity, need to hear adults read to them, and need to read extensively on their own to increase vocabulary.
- Teach key vocabulary explicitly for in-depth learning.
- Vocabulary that represents academic discourse needs special attention. Terms that have specific meaning in the language arts curriculum and which students are expected to use as they express their learning require explicit instruction, i.e., protagonist, thesis, onomatopoeia, conjunction, clause.
- Ultimately students develop “working” definitions rather than memorized, precise dictionary definitions of new vocabulary. Working definitions are personalized and develop incrementally, so that word meanings acquire greater precision, sophistication and nuancing over time.
- Vocabulary and concept development should be a focus across the curriculum as students need to understand specialized vocabulary and varied meanings in every content area.
Class discussions of word choice, image patterns, tone and connotation naturally address vocabulary learning.

Provide a wide range of reading material so that students can learn vocabulary in context, vocabulary as it relates to prior knowledge and vocabulary that is taught explicitly.

Dictionaries contain more that just the definitions of words. Studying word origins and how meanings have evolved over time is a fascinating inquiry that illustrates how language is tied to culture.

Introduce a variety of reference materials which contain rich background on vocabulary: thesauruses, etymologies, dictionaries of regional usage and slang, and others.

Classroom Practices

Provide time for independent reading, discussing and writing so that students receive adequate exposure to and practice in using new vocabulary.

Provide read alouds and shared reading so students hear new vocabulary in context.

Take advantage of new opportunities that pique curiosity and encourage students' favorable attitudes toward words and vocabulary learning.

Introduce words in “meaning families” so that semantic, structural, and morphological relationships among words are explicit.

Introduce students to important components of word meaning through systematic exposure to morphology (the patterns of word formation, including inflection, derivation, and composition) and semantics (the study of meaning, what makes sense).

☑ Common affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and root words
☑ Compounding and inflections
☑ Processes through which word meanings change
☑ Levels of abstraction
☑ Importance of context

Teach students how to analyze unfamiliar words.

1. Examine the word for meaningful parts—base words, prefixes, or suffixes:

☐ If there is a prefix, take it off first.
☐ If there is a suffix, take it off second.
☐ Look at the base or root word to see whether you know it or can think of a related word.
☐ Reassemble the word, thinking about the meaning contributed by the base or root, the suffix or the prefix.
2. Try to pronounce a new word, looking for familiar patterns and trying out pronunciations of syllables.

3. Try out a meaning in the sentence; check whether this meaning makes sense in the context of the sentence and the larger context of the text.

4. If the word still does not make sense, look it up in the dictionary.

* Use instructional strategies that foster vocabulary development:
  
  ✓ Concept definition mapping
  
  Graphic organizer that defines a key term, lists attributes and provides examples.

  ✓ Word walls
  
  Reinforcement activity which uses bulletin boards or walls to display key vocabulary.

  ✓ Vocabulary continuums
  
  Visual representation of an extended word family that ranges from words on one extreme to those on the other extreme, i.e., irate to ebullient.

  ✓ Vocabulary interview
  
  Questioning process where an individual represents a concept and responds to inquiries.

**Words… Words… Words**

When we balance teacher-mediated word learning strategies with time for reading, we see a student’s:

- Increased sense of word play.
- Heightened awareness of sound and rhyme.
- Inquisitiveness about word meanings.
- More diverse and richer use of language.
- Ability to construct semantic maps or graphic organizers to extend understanding.
- Interest in word games (computers, puzzles, board games).
- Ability and willingness to read more complex literature.

Inquiry and Research

Standards

Wisconsin Standard C: Students in Wisconsin will locate, use and communicate information from a variety of print and nonprint materials.

Performance Standards:

By the end of grade Eight, students will:

Conduct research and inquiry on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problems and use an appropriate form to communicate their findings.

- Formulate research questions and focus investigation on relevant and accessible sources of information.
- Use multiple sources to identify and locate information pertinent to research including encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, library catalogs, indexes to periodicals, and various electronic search engines.
- Conduct interviews, field studies, and experiments and use specialized resources (such as almanacs, fact books, pamphlets, and technical manuals) when appropriate to an investigation.
- Compile, organize, and evaluate information, taking notes that record and summarize what has been learned and extending the investigation to other sources.
- Review and evaluate the usefulness of information gathered in an investigation.
- Produce an organized written and oral report that presents and reflects on findings, draws sound conclusions, adheres to the conventions for preparing a manuscript, and gives proper credit to sources.

MMSD Grade Level Performance Standards: The students will

Grade Six

Select the best sources for a given purpose, including atlases, dictionaries, globes, interviews, telephone directories, encyclopedias, and electronic databases:

- formulate or identify questions.
- compile and organize information.
- use specialized resources (such as almanacs, fact books, pamphlets, and technical manuals) when appropriate to an investigation.
- review and evaluate the usefulness of information gathered.

Present information in written and/or oral form.

Grade Seven

Apply knowledge of resources in preparing written and/or oral presentations:

- focus investigation on relevant and accessible sources of information.
- use graphic organizers to organize information.
- use a thesaurus to select more exact descriptive, specific, or effective vocabulary for writing.
- integrate information from various sources.
- credit reference sources.
Grade Eight

Conduct research and inquiry on self-selected or assigned topics, issues, or problems and use an appropriate form to communicate findings:

☐ compile, organize, and evaluate information, taking notes that record and summarize what has been learned
☐ produce an organized written and/or oral report that presents and reflects on findings, draws sound conclusions and gives proper credit to sources
☐ develop and use graphic representations to support meaning, if appropriate
**What is Inquiry and Research at Middle School?**

**Inquiry** is a process of wondering. It is open-ended and driven by the students’ interests. Students move beyond the Who, What, Where, and When to ask the higher level questions of Why, What if, and How might. As students think, read, write and discuss, their approach to learning shifts and questioning becomes more thoughtful and purposeful.

**Research** is the process through which students use a variety of resources to explore a topic, gain and understand information, write and present the research. Research often begins with open-ended questions.

**Important Considerations**

- Questioning based on curiosity is the first step in the research process. Thoughtful questions, whether based on prior knowledge or new knowledge, arise from wanting to know more.

- Inquiry-based learning should occur throughout the entire year.

- Give students time to explore and choose topics of interest in order to build background knowledge. Students write best when they wonder, care and know about their topics.

- Students need the resources and tools necessary to foster inquiry and research.

- Inquiry involves extensive independent reading.

- Students need to read nonfiction material to write their own expository text.

- Develop with students the goals and rubrics that will guide the inquiry project assessment.
What is Essential to the Inquiry Process?

Establish an Atmosphere for Inquiry

❖ Establish a safe and risk-free classroom community.
❖ Create an environment that encourages active questioning rather than passive answering.
❖ Honor and value all questions.
❖ Provide time for discussion on authentic issues, events and people in order to heighten curiosity.
❖ Share your passions and interests with students and describe how these evolved. Encourage students to share their passions and interests.
❖ Within a standards-based curriculum, integrate the inquiry process throughout the year.

Teach Students to Formulate Questions

❖ Model formulating questions throughout the year, both in mini-lessons and in conversations with students.
❖ Encourage students to use open-ended, engaging questioning that goes beyond the literal:
  - What are some possible solutions to the problem?
  - Why is this important?
  - What could happen as a result of this problem?
❖ Demonstrate that questions may be internal (representing strong feelings, reactions, personal experience) or external (representing questions about the outside world).
❖ Give students many opportunities to practice questioning and develop awareness of the levels of questions they are asking.

Teach Students to Evaluate Questions

❖ Start small—students do want answers to questions. Some can be answered quickly and do not necessarily need to become a research project.
❖ Model for students that some questions lead to more questions.
❖ Teach students to consider meaningful and significant questions. “What is a question that really matters to you, one that keeps you wondering and searching for answers?”
❖ Help students to identify questions that linger as promising for further research.
What are the Research Steps?

Reflecting and Questioning

- Emphasize student-generated questions that consider their interests and prior knowledge.
- List questions that emerge from class discussion.
- Teach students how to create lists of questions.
- Teach students to ask the following questions:
  - What do I already **KNOW** about the subject?
  - What do I **WANT** to know?
  - **HOW** will I find out?
  - What have I **LEARNED**?
  - How will I **USE** the information?
- Model for students how to group and categorize related ideas.
- Teach students how to create a question web by placing a question in the center of a circle. Model how to record further questions on the branches off the central idea.
- Caution students to avoid questions that are too broad, too narrow, or too unclear. Such questions can be starting points though, as students continue to focus and refine their thinking. Teach students to dig further into their questions to find a significant question for investigation.
- Return to the Web site or list during research to check progress in answering questions.
- Remind students to check whether they have answered their questions and to notice whether they have discovered important, new questions during their inquiry.

“Turning students from passive receivers to active constructors of meaning involves asking them to use reading rather than ‘do’ reading.”

—Doug Buehl, Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning
**Reading Nonfiction**

- Model skimming and scanning techniques.
  - Model and guide practice in surveying text before reading and detecting text structure and features (bold headings, subheadings and font changes).
  - Model and guide practice in examining visual and graphic information (charts, maps, pictures).
  - Model and guide practice in examining table of contents and indexes.
  - Model and guide practice in identifying text structures (compare/contrast, cause/effect, proposition/support, goal/action/outcome, problem/solution, concept/definition).
  - Model and guide practice in using chapter titles and headings to locate useful material.

- Model prioritizing and summarizing techniques.
  - Model and guide practice in determining importance in a text, including articles that have no headings.
  - Model and guide practice in using sticky notes to mark main points in margins of text.
  - Model and guide practice in summarizing in one sentence or phrase a short text.
  - Encourage students to talk about what they are reading to solidify their understanding of new information.

**Gathering Resources**

- Help students identify resources that support inquiry and research:
  - Advertisements
  - Biographies
  - Catalogues
  - CD-ROM
  - Content area reference materials
  - Diaries
  - Dictionaries and other vocabulary resources
  - E-mails
  - Encyclopedias
  - Field trips
  - Historical society publications
  - Internet Web sites
  - Interviews
  - Magazines and periodicals
  - Manuals
  - Maps, globes and atlases
  - Museum publications
  - Newspapers
  - Nonfiction books
  - Professionals in the field
  - Surveys
  - Travel guides
  - Video and audio tapes

"Our favorite authors can be our best teachers. We grow to know them through their books, and we learn about writing by reading their work."

— Stephanie Harvey
*Nonfiction Matters*

"Instead of relying upon a single authority, students consult a variety of sources and voices on the topic, constructing their own understanding of what is fact, what is true, what is right. The students are not only reading about settled facts and closed questions; they are also reading in the area of the unsettled, the debatable, the still-emerging."

— Daniels and Zemelman
*Subjects Matter*
Teach and model for students how to verify the credibility and authenticity of sources.

Demonstrate how to use primary sources (interviews, letters, surveys and original documents).

Require students to use a variety of secondary sources (books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, CD ROMs, magazines, videos, Internet and audiotapes).

Guide students in using the Internet, by posing the following questions:

- Is the source credible, reliable, and accurate?
- Is the information current?
- Is it readable?
- Is it easy to navigate with active links?
- Is it visually engaging?
- Is the topic covered in depth?
- Have you used the back button when locating information unrelated to the question in order to stay on topic?

Teach and require students to keep track of and record sources as they find them.

Note-Taking

Model and guide practice in taking notes from a variety of reference materials (primary sources, secondary sources, interviews).

Model and guide practice in strategies for determining importance (text coding, highlighting, sticky notes).

Model and guide practice in paraphrasing while note-taking as opposed to copying passages verbatim. Demonstrate jotting down only the most important ideas and vocabulary.

Model personal systems for abbreviations (initials, contractions and asterisks).

Model a variety of note-taking forms (note cards, two-column, formal outlines, webbing) and graphic organizers that match the structure of the text.

Model how to reread notes, to highlight important information, and to analyze whether students have gathered sufficient information for answering their questions.

Model and guide practice in using technology to organize information (Inspiration Software, Inc., PowerPoint).
Prioritizing, Reflecting and Synthesizing

Teach students to reread and reflect on all their notes, searching for general themes and important ideas.

Give students practice in synthesizing by creating two columns of notes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Personal Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Model consolidating notes by:

- Creating new webs to illustrate overall new relationships
- Sharing with someone what you have learned. “Talk about the three most important ideas on your topic.”
- Ordering most important information and ideas.

Confer with students throughout the inquiry process and initiate informal conversations:

- How have you answered your question?
- What additional information do you need?
- What are your most significant findings?

Research Writing

Model for students how to use notes to craft their own writing without plagiarizing.

Gather exemplars to share with students.

Model how to write an opening lead to hook the audience:

- Provocative question
- Engaging dialogue
- Revealing example
- Surprising information
- Humorous anecdote

Model the use of text frames to organize information:

- Sequential/chronological (goal/action/outcome)
- Comparison/contrast
- Problem/solution
- Cause/effect
- Proposition/support
- Concept/definition

“Nonfiction text, for example, often conveys information that helps the reader form a particular viewpoint. A reader’s thinking changes as he ingests new information gleaned from the text.”

– Stephanie Harvey
Strategies that Work
Model how to conclude the writing with prompting questions:

- Did I include all needed information?
- Did I tie up loose ends?
- Do I have anything more to say?
- Did I answer my original questions?
- Will the reader feel satisfied or at least challenged?
- Does the ending fit?
- Did I check the 6 + 1 Traits® rubric?
- What additional information do I need?

Adapted from Harvey, S. (1998). Nonfiction Matters

Consider using a slide show to present information. This provides the opportunity for critical evaluation, organization of thinking and speaking in front of a group.

**Presenting Research**

Brainstorm the variety of ways in which students can demonstrate their learning by publishing and presenting their work. Work with students to select meaningful formats for sharing their research with a broader audience:

- Accordion fold books
- Advertisements
- Articles
- Biographical sketches
- Book covers
- Book reviews
- Captions
- Cartoons
- Children's books
- Concept maps
- Definitions
- Editorials
- E-mails
- Fact files
- Historical accounts
- Instructional "How to"
- Interviews
- Itineraries
- Job specifications
- Journal entries
- Letters
- Lists
- Memos
- Newsletters
- Newspapers
- Oral presentations
- Overhead transparencies
- Poems
- Postcards
- Posters
- Reports
- Slide shows
- Songs
- Telegrams
- Travel brochures
- Trifolds
- Web publishing
- Webbing
- Written reports
Help students consider the following presentation questions:

- Have you referred to the Presentation rubric and the criteria of a “5” paper?
- Is your information accurate?
- Is your message clear and well organized?
- Does your presentation engage the audience?
- Have you used visual aids?

Ask students to consider when writing the report:

- Have you referred to the Presentation rubric and the criteria of a “5” paper?
- Have you varied the size of font—using a larger and distinctly different font to organize your message?
- Have you proofread carefully?
- Is your layout appealing?
- Have you chosen appropriate graphics or artwork for your writing?
- Have you looked at the layout/design to make sure your message is clear?
Project Planning Checklist:

☐ Be in the habit of asking questions.

☐ Generate questions of real interest to you.

☐ Determine what you know about the topic.

☐ Identify your audience.

☐ Gather information from a variety of sources.

☐ Record and organize the information.

☐ Analyze information and form new ideas.

☐ Write the report in your own voice.

☐ Plan to use this information in some way.

☐ Include a bibliography.

☐ Decide on the presentation form.

☐ Prepare your presentation.

☐ Present the information.

☐ Evaluate your work.
Crediting Sources

Teach students how to annotate the source by writing titles, authors, year of copyright, publisher, city of publication and page numbers used on their page of notes as they find them. It is difficult to go back and retrieve this information. The examples below follow the bibliographic format for references from the American Psychological Association (APA).

Book—single author

Book—more than one author

Chapter from a book

Teach students to cite online sources of information as well as those taken from books, periodicals, or other resources used to support research. In addition, cite graphics, sound clips, and video clips used in a presentation.

E-MAIL
Structure:
Sender of email message <sender's email address>. Subject line of the message. Date of message (day, month, year). E-mail recipient <recipient's email address>.

WORLD WIDE WEB
Structure:
Author or originator. Title of item. [Online] Date of document or download (day, month, year). URL <http://address/filename>.

ONLINE IMAGES
Structure:
Author or originator. Description or title of image. [Online image] Date of document or download (day, month, year). URL <http://address/filename>.
ONLINE SOUNDS
Structure:
Author or originator. Description or title of sound. [Online sound]
Date of document or download (day, month, year). URL
<http://address/filename>.

ONLINE VIDEO CLIPS
Structure:
Author or originator. Description or title of video clip. [Online video clip] Date of document or download (day, month, year). URL
<http://address/filename>.

Source:

http://www.mmsd.org/tnl/langarts/laresources3.htm
PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES
PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Books on Reading


**Books on Writing**


Spandel, V. (2001). *Books, lessons, ideas for teaching the six traits: Writing at the middle and high school.* Wilingham, MA: Great Source.

**Books on Language and Communication**


**General**


**Web sites**

International Reading Association (IRA)
[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)

National Council Teachers of English
[www.ncte](http://www.ncte)

National Writing Project
[www.writingproject.org](http://www.writingproject.org)

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
[www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org)

Interactive Dialog with Educators from Across the State (IDEAS)
[www.IDEAS.Wisconsin.edu](http://www.IDEAS.Wisconsin.edu)

State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)
[www.dpi.state.wi.us](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us)

Wisconsin Literacy Education and Reading Network Resource
[www.wilearns.org](http://www.wilearns.org)

Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA)
[www.wsra.org](http://www.wsra.org)

**Other suggested Web resources:**

[www.grammarlady.com](http://www.grammarlady.com)
[www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)
[www.literacymatters.org/](http://www.literacymatters.org/)
[www.readwritethink.org/lessons](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons)
[www.rubrics.com](http://www.rubrics.com)
[www.writingfix.com](http://www.writingfix.com)