

Cecil County Public Schools Secondary English Language Arts

PHILOSOPHY

The vision of a literate society equipped to cope with the complex world of the future depends upon the collective actions of all members of the school community. Every student deserves an excellent program of instruction in English language arts that challenges each student to achieve at the level required for productive citizenship and successful employment.

Secondary school English language arts is a recursive subject that encompasses literacy skills and processes necessary for students' success. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprise the processes of the English language arts while language and literature encompass the content, all of which are integral to a student's ability to express, create, learn, interpret, and stimulate thoughts and feelings. To be learned and used effectively, these processes and content are best taught and assessed in an integrated manner. The Cecil County secondary school English language arts program ensures that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are deliberately aligned with the Voluntary State Curriculum and support the Core Learning Goals and the International Reading Association/National Council of Teachers of English Standards for the English Language Arts.

The secondary school English language arts program embraces the philosophy that language is the basis for communicating, learning, and thinking. Reading is the foundation upon which all learning is built; therefore, students receive explicit reading instruction with time provided to develop reading skills and strategies. Subsequently, students use these comprehension strategies in order to construct, extend, and examine meaning as they explore literary and informational text. Writing in response to reading and engaging in the writing process promotes thoughtful learning and improves students' abilities to construct meaning. As a result, secondary students value literacy and are confident in their abilities to communicate effectively in a global society.

Cecil County Public Schools Secondary English Language Arts

VISION

What are students doing?

- acquiring and applying before, during and after reading skills and strategies
- reading a variety of instructional texts for informational and literary comprehension in each unit of study in whole group, small groups and independently
- participating in Reader's Workshop, where choices of reading material are offered and discussions occur
- responding to text in oral/written form from all reading stances (literal, interpretive, and critical)
- reading independently self-selected material
- reading orally with accuracy and expression at an appropriate rate
- developing and using graphic organizers to respond to reading and using teacher-generated and student-generated assessment tools to score responses
- developing and using graphic organizers as part of the prewriting process
- participating in Writer's Workshop, where choices of writing genre are offered and teacher conferencing and peer conferencing occur
- using the writing process to compose original selections for three purposes (literary expression, informative, persuasive) in each unit of study
- participating in portfolio collection, selection and reflection to assess and refine learning
- refining language skills through the study of grammar, usage, and conventions in context
- using technology in an integrated fashion to become better readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and thinkers
- increasing vocabulary and improving spelling skills through relevant and effective word study
- applying active listening strategies and delivering effective oral presentations for a variety of purposes
- locating and using appropriate sources while engaging in the research process
- working collaboratively in small groups on a regular basis
- assessing individual reading and writing growth and establishing goals for fluency
- engaging in formative and summative assessments to monitor and advance learning

What does student work/performance look like?

- incorporates relevant connections, extensions, and/or examinations of meaning in oral and written reading responses
- demonstrates application of knowledge in authentic products and/or performances
- incorporates quality development, organization, attention to audience and purpose, and language (grammar, usage, and conventions) in limited and extended writing
- includes specific teacher feedback at various stages of the reading and writing processes to achieve quality responses
- demonstrates an understanding of content and process at the conceptual level
- listens actively and attentively

What do teachers value?

- believing that all students can be held to rigorous academic standards
- striving to develop and maintain a balanced literacy program
- using ongoing assessment (e.g., rubrics, conferencing, teacher observation) to inform and direct instruction
- giving students choices of reading material and writing modes
- using whole group, small group, and one-on-one instructional methods (flexible grouping and differentiation)
- providing modeling and guided practice for students through mini-lessons and scaffolded instruction
- connecting authentic performances and products to current unit of study
- having students independently apply what has been learned
- providing reteaching, extra-help, and intervention when necessary
- applying the Dimensions of Learning
- developing professionally studying current research in the areas of literacy and pedagogy
- working collaboratively with peers to promote student achievement
- creating a literacy-rich environment that is inviting and conducive to learning

What are teacher and administrator expectations for students?

- taking advantage of before-school, after-school, and summer reading and writing intervention opportunities
- showing positive attitudes and willingness to learn
- valuing literacy
- engaging in reading and writing beyond the classroom
- committing to excellence
- attending class regularly
- emulating character education traits
- setting goals and working to achieve them
- revising products for quality
- becoming independent learners

What are parents doing, and how is the community supporting English language arts?

- requiring their children to take advantage of before-school, after-school, and summer reading and writing intervention opportunities
- supporting students, teachers, and administrators in learning
- emphasizing the importance of life-long learning
- providing opportunities to visit the public library on a regular basis
- establishing a family reading time
- attending literacy events held in the community
- subscribing to newspapers and periodicals
- encouraging children to participate in the public library's summer reading programs
- encouraging children to purchase reading materials through school book clubs and local book stores
- encouraging children to express themselves through oral and written communication
- volunteering time and resources to support the school's literacy initiatives
- funding school literacy projects
- funding public library resources
- supporting the Cecil County Public Schools budget
- providing business partnerships that support literacy
- becoming involved in school and county reading initiatives