



“By ‘curriculum’ we mean a coherent, sequential set of guidelines in English Language Arts, specifying the content knowledge and skills that all students are expected to learn, over time, in a thoughtful progression across grades. We do not mean textbook offerings, daily lesson plans or rigid pedagogical prescriptions.”

-SFUSD Humanities Department

## English Language Arts PK-12 Core Curriculum: A Comprehensive Instructional Approach to Literacy

### What is a comprehensive approach to literacy in SFUSD?

As we implement the English Language Arts PK-12 Core Curriculum, which identifies the knowledge and skills that students are expected to know and be able to apply as outlined in the **SFUSD PK-12 Scope and Sequence**, we also need to attend to the instructional practices we employ to make sure that our students are benefitting from high quality instruction in all our classrooms. In order to provide rich and balanced literacy instruction for our students in SFUSD, we must incorporate many approaches to teaching literacy. A

comprehensive literacy model provides numerous and varied literacy opportunities for all students. We acknowledge that students do not all learn in the same way and we must provide meaningful and appropriate instruction to support a variety of learning styles.

A comprehensive approach to literacy is not a curriculum; it is an instructional model. It is not what we teach but how we teach. The framework provides a structure for the teacher that focuses on balancing instruction rather than creating lessons based on any one philosophy. The focus needs to shift to

the student and the individual learning needs that can be revealed through diagnostic and ongoing formative assessments. Only when all teachers learn to diagnose student reading and writing skills and respond with focused, deliberate instruction that allows students to interact with others and apply their newly gained knowledge and skills will literacy be available to all students.

---

“By its very nature, learning involves progression. To assist in its emergence, teachers need to understand the pathways along which students are expected to progress. These pathways or progressions ground both instruction and assessment.”

- Margaret Heritage (2008)

## SFUSD: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO LITERACY

In pre kindergarten through grade 5, SFUSD teachers use the SFUSD ELA PK-12 Core Curriculum Scope and Sequence to design curriculum. Teachers draw on a research-based instructional model we call the comprehensive approach to literacy. Through this approach we stress the essential dimensions of reading through explicit teaching of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Daily read-alouds, independent reading time (i.e., reading workshop), writing workshop, and systematic word study instruction are key features of the approach. Teachers demonstrate the habits and strategies of effective reading and writing through a variety of structures: read-aloud, guided reading, shared reading, interactive writing, and mini-lessons in reading and writing. Students are asked to engage in formal and informal conversational structures on grade appropriate topics.

In middle school, teachers continue to use the structures and components of the comprehensive approach to literacy. Students in middle school continue to refine, advance, and apply their reading, writing, language and listening and speaking skills to build knowledge about new subject matter. There is an emphasis on collaborative conversations within the speaking and listening standards that call for students to



engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions. Reading selections in the nonfiction genres increase with regard to number and depth of study. Expository writing opportunities are highlighted as students are asked to write for different purposes and audiences.

High school students become more sophisticated readers and writers while deepening their knowledge through the study and exploration of various genres and literary and nonfiction works in World Literature, the Ethnic Experience in America, American and European Literature. Writing opportunities abound as students engage in the crafting of narrative, informative/explanatory, argument and research papers. Writing for different audiences and purposes is highlighted as students are asked to produce more complex papers where they use various texts and non-print sources as evidence to support their arguments. Students are actively engaged in collaborative

conversations on literary and nonfiction topics in accordance to the speaking and listening standards.

As a part of our English language arts work we also attend to the formative assessment pieces that provide us with the information we need to modify, reteach and or enhance the learning experiences of our students. This model encourages collegial collaboration as teachers engage in professional dialogue about the most effective strategies to implement as they teach and re-teach concepts and skills that pose challenges to students.

As we promote a comprehensive approach to literacy, we establish a purpose for learning, model how to effectively deliver content knowledge, connect the learning to students' personal and cultural experiences, foster explicit strategy instruction and provide opportunities for student practice in whole group, small group and individual settings. This instructional approach is delivered through the gradual release of responsibility model.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO LITERACY

### Reading Aloud

Primary purposes are to:

- Expand background knowledge
- Increase vocabulary
- Demonstrate reading for a purpose
- Expand literary knowledge
- Promote oral language development
- Promote reading for enjoyment
- Provide a model for fluent reading
- Serve as mentor texts

The teacher reads aloud to the whole class. The selected text can be from a variety of genres and serve as resources for discussion and writing. It is a time for the teacher and students to think about, talk about and respond to the text. Because the teacher is doing the reading, student attention is freed from processing the print and they can focus on comprehension, literary elements and text analysis with support and guidance from the teacher.

### Shared Reading

Primary purposes are to:

- Explicitly demonstrate the various strategic actions of the reading process
- Support student processing of print
- Involve students in the behaviors of reading

Teachers read an enlarged version of text, pointing to words or phrases, as students follow along and join in. The selection may be a large print book, a chart, or a projected text.

### Guided Reading

Primary purposes are to:

- Provide individualized small group instruction that is based on assessment
- Give students the opportunity to read at their instructional reading level
- Provide explicit instruction to help students expand their reading processing systems
- Provide scaffolds that enable students to access the full meaning of texts
- Expose students to a wide variety of literature
- Teach students how to read material that becomes increasingly more complex

In guided reading, teachers group students by their instructional reading level, select a particular text, and provide explicit instruction to help expand their reading processing systems.



## COLLABORATIVE WORK IS A HALLMARK OF SFUSD'S ELA PK-12 CORE CURRICULUM

### Independent Reading

Primary purposes are to:

- Provide daily opportunities for students to read self-selected books
- Expose students to various genres, topics, writing styles and authors
- Provide time for students to engage in fluent reading daily
- Provide opportunity to apply reading strategies independently
- Provides time for the teacher to conference with individual students or work with small groups

Students read self-selected books independently. They respond verbally and in writing to the parts of their reading that are interesting and /or pertinent to them. It is a time to create a reading community as students are given ongoing opportunities to share and discuss what is read.

### Language

Primary purposes are to:

- Provide vocabulary-building, grammar, usage, conventions and communication structures

### Speaking & Listening

Primary purposes are to:

- Provide opportunities for students to communicate and use informal and academic vocabulary in conversations

### Phonics, Spelling and Word Work

Primary purposes are to:

- Develop and extend phonological awareness
- Provide opportunities to manipulate

letters and make words

- Assist students in becoming strategic in reading words
- Help students use what they know about words to solve new words
- Help readers develop fluency and flexibility in solving words

Students learn about the relationships of letters to sounds as well as the structure of words to help them in reading and writing.

### Writing

Primary purposes are to:

- Expose students to and increase their skills in writing, revising, editing, illustrating and finishing.
- Provide opportunities to write for different purposes across the curriculum
- Help writers develop voice and orthographic awareness
- Provide opportunities for students to respond to nonfiction and literary text

As in reading, the writing component can be presented with different approaches. These approaches and writing strategies are embedded within SFUSD's writing plan *When Teachers and Students Write*. Writing offers students the opportunity to expand and express their thinking in response to reading and discussions and to apply the writing process.

The various instructional approaches mentioned above consist of engaging interactions and motivational, high interest materials, which support all learners including ELLs and students with special needs.