

# Atlantic City Public Schools

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## English Language Arts 6th - 8th Grade Curriculum Guide

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## Acknowledgements

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A final word of thanks to the Atlantic City Board of Education for the continued support and assistance that they provide to us, as we strive to improve our educational practices.

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## **Vision of the Atlantic City School District**

“Children grow into the intellectual life of those around them.” --Vygotsky

The teaching of language arts literacy in the Atlantic City School District is dedicated to developing the lifelong skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language. We endeavor to develop independent learners who lead literate lives. Educators are an essential part of this process, through responsive, standards-based teaching and ongoing professional development. As teachers form collaborative professional learning communities, they generate a set of core values and common understandings regarding the nature of student learning. In effect, students benefit from this process through enhanced learning, independence, and agency.

### **Core Beliefs**

Our district recognizes the right of every child to grow up literate as a member of a dynamic learning community. Literacy learning is an ongoing, daily process. Our guaranteed and viable curriculum should be easily communicated by all, and reinforced through cycles of ongoing professional learning and growth. Students are motivated to examine new ideas that encourage intellectual curiosity and act as powerful agents in their own learning.

Atlantic City Schools lay the foundation where students are part of learning communities that sustain literacy growth and success. Students engage in authentic inquiry within and beyond classroom walls. They develop a sense of self-efficacy in their ability to acquire and use language and literacy for both learning and enjoyment. Students engage in meaningful literacy discourse about relevant content that engages their hearts and minds. They read, reflect, talk, and write about authentic, culturally diverse texts that vary in genre and content.

All educators in Atlantic City Schools will implement a coherent set of research-based practices in whole group, small group, and individual contexts in literacy. They will make daily instructional decisions through the use of evidence based observation and ongoing assessment data. Teachers will work as members of collaborative professional learning teams that take collective ownership for the achievement of all students. As such, this learning community of educators will share both a common vision and goals. They will demonstrate a strong commitment to their own ongoing professional learning in order to sustain reform and literacy success for all students.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) of educators will work through cycles of forming learning goals, examining student learning, and developing strategies to enhance student learning. The six guiding questions that will form the basis for all PLC cycles are:

- What is it we want our students to know?
- How do we know that students learned?
- How will we respond when students don't learn?
- How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?
- How will we increase our instructional competence?
- How will we coordinate our efforts as a school?

The integration of 21st Century Skills is embedded throughout the implemented curriculum in order to provide students with life and career skills in preparation to be active citizens in a global society. The systematic integration of these skills within the curriculum will foster a student population that applies critical thinking and problem-solving strategies. Additionally, effective communication and collaboration skills, along with the authentic utilization of technology and financial literacy, are also provided in order to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century global workplace. These skills are addressed in the following standards: Standard 9.1: Personal Financial Literacy, Standard 9.2: Career Awareness, Exploration, and Preparation, and Standard 9.3: Career and Technical Education.

The diversity of Atlantic City School District is reflected in its large population of English Language Learners (ELLs) present in every school. The overarching goal of instruction for ELLs is to prepare them to meet the WIDA English Language Development and the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, as well as College and Career Readiness Standards. In order to achieve this goal, teachers use the Bilingual/ESL Curriculum Handbook, in conjunction with the district curriculum that integrates content and standards for instruction. The handbook supports teachers in delivering sheltered language and content instruction to ELLs using the integrated ESL/ELA and content curriculum documents.

## **Overview of Literacy Framework**

The framework is divided into the following grade levels for quality literacy instruction: K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. In each of these grade levels, instructional best practice in literacy includes the following essential elements, which are divided into whole group, small group, and individual components. Within the whole group setting, teachers utilize mini-lesson statements for reading, writing, and language/word study based on grade-level strategies in alignment with the district curriculum and the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, Interactive Read Alouds as mentor texts, Shared Reading, and Book Talks for reader engagement. Additionally, Interactive/Shared Writing, Writer Talks, and Group Share are also utilized to sustain literacy growth and success. Within the small group setting, literacy centers are utilized for the primary grades, along with guided reading and guided writing for leveled, tiered instruction to meet the needs of all students. Furthermore, within the individual setting, teacher-student conferencing occurs during reading and writing to broaden understandings and lift the thinking of the students. Independent reading and writing enables the students to take ownership of their learning in a structured manner to become self-capacitated as learners based on the characteristics of literate readers and writers.

## **6-8 English Language Arts/ Social Studies/ Science/ Bilingual/ ESL Curriculum**

### **Curriculum Design and Implementation**

The 6-8 Middle School Curriculum fully integrates the [New Jersey Student Learning Standards \(NJSLS\)](#) and the [WIDA English and Spanish Language Proficiency Standards in English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science](#). Units of study in reading and writing follow a pacing guide aligned with the New Jersey Curricular Framework for each respective grade level.

The district utilizes a multi-text approach to English Language Arts instruction using a framework which includes reading workshop, writing workshop, and language word study. Embedded in the reading workshop is the use of literature circles. The structure of these reading groups allow student-centered, teacher-facilitated learning about texts, genre, and literary language. The writing workshop is rooted in inquiry, exploration and composition in various modes, styles and genres of writing. Language word study instruction takes place within both workshops, as students notice the functions, relationships and origins of words in authentic settings.

### **[ACPS Middle School ELA-Rotation Schedule 2018-2019 \(Two 42 Minute Periods\)](#)**

**Curriculum maps and pacing guides can be found in the following links:**

#### **Pacing Guides**

**Grade 6 - [Pacing Guide](#)**

**Grade 7 - [Pacing Guide](#)**

**Grade 8 - [Pacing Guide](#)**

#### **Curriculum Maps**

**Grade 6 -[Marking Period 1](#), [Marking Period 2](#), [Marking Period 3](#), [Marking Period 4](#)**

**Grade 7 -[Marking Period 1](#), [Marking Period 2](#), [Marking Period 3](#), [Marking Period 4](#)**

**Grade 8 -[Marking Period 1](#), [Marking Period 2](#), [Marking Period 3](#), [Marking Period 4](#)**

#### **Units of Study in Reading and Writing:**

**[Grade 6-8 Units of Study 2018-2019](#)**



## **Integrated Accommodations and Modifications**

The curriculum is developed to meet the academic needs of all children in Atlantic City Schools. The content and language proficiency standards are the same for all students. Teachers use accommodations and modifications to make content comprehensible for all students. Lesson activities, assignments, and assessments are modified to lead students to mastery of content standards. The curriculum suggests the following accommodations and modifications:

### **[2018-2019 Integrated Modifications and Accommodations 3-8](#)**

#### **Assessments**

Student achievement is measured and dependent upon the use of high quality assessments. The purpose of assessment is multi-faceted. Interval assessments are systematic and intentional while being authentic in nature. It is the district's stance that high quality, intentional assessments are essential in:

- determining leveled reading groups
- measuring group's progress
- informing instruction at various points in the school year (formative)
- assessing effectiveness of instruction midway or at the conclusion of the year (summative)
- reporting systematically in a formal manner that analyzes changes in data/achievement

#### **[2018-2019 K-8 District English Language Arts Assessment Calendar](#)**

- The District English Language Arts Assessment Calendar provides teachers with a calendar overview of required assessments (grade bands are tabbed at the bottom); this data is then placed in edConnect.
- [edConnect](#)

#### **[2018-2019 Grade 6 English Language Arts Assessments](#)**

#### **[2018-2019 Grade 7 English Language Arts Assessments](#)**

#### **[2018-2019 Grade 8 English Language Arts Assessments](#)**

- These links provide access to assessments in grades 6-8 and classifies these assessments as Benchmark, Formative, Summative, and Alternative.

#### **[Alternative Assessments for the ELL Curriculum](#)**

- This document provides guidance for teachers on creating alternative assessments for ELLs based on language proficiency levels.

#### **[Grades 6-8 Core Instructional and Supplemental Materials](#)**

## **Interdisciplinary Connections**

Teachers will find the daily opportunities to make explicit interdisciplinary connections with ELA, Social Studies, and Science. WIDA English and Spanish Language Development Standards are integrated in each unit as well. All standards are listed on page one of the [curriculum maps](#). Some standards are inherently taught in the core material lessons, while other standards can be taught through interdisciplinary extension activities, which are represented in all curricula. ELA Reading and Writing Units of Study are genre based and support the content instruction.

The [Atlantic City Social Studies curriculum](#) incorporates the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Language Arts. Interactive read aloud, reader's theater, and reading and writing genre specific units of study are suggested activities that reflect the standards taught in the language arts block, and resources to support those activities. Teachers use their judgement and professional experience to tailor lessons to the specific needs of their classroom.

The [Atlantic City Science Curriculum](#) incorporates the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Language Arts. Scientifically literate individuals possess the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision-making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity. The science instructional model Mystery Science utilizes the inquiry stance, scientific reading and writing, an interactive science notebook, interactive read aloud, and a myriad of oral language development activities through lab work and conversations around scientific topics.

## **[Integration of 21st Century Skills, Integration of Technology, and Careers](#)**

Embedded in the English Language Arts curriculum is the integration of the [21st Century Skills](#), [Careers](#), and [Technology NJSLS](#). The classroom community is committed to developing cooperative work in teams. This is demonstrated through the instructional environment that promotes collaboration, discussion, and critical thinking and reflection. Students use technology daily through a blended learning model in both reading and writing workshop. In writing workshop students use either instructional materials or processes taught within classrooms. Examples include, but are not limited to, routine writing units of study (ie: business/formal letter resume, and email writing), use of Google Suite for research, composing, and publishing, creating a virtual portfolio of writing about reading responses, critical thinking reflections at the conclusion of a unit of study, and cooperative work in teams.

## [Comprehensive Bibliography for K-8 Curriculum](#)