



Literacy Instruction at CMS

At Clayton Middle School, the foundation of our English Language Arts program is Balanced Literacy, a research-proven learning model that blends and *balances* instructional strategies in reading and writing.

The 84-minute ELA Block is comprised of several components which include...

- Word Study – Vocabulary and spelling instruction is approached through the study of Greek Latin Roots and Affixes and through reading and discussing fiction and non-fiction texts.
- Group Instruction – Shared reading and writing lessons provide students an opportunity to learn and practice together.
- Guided Reading – Explicit instruction in small guided reading groups at the student’s instructional reading level is a daily part of our program.
- Independent Reading – Frequent opportunities for students to read a self-selected book for a sustained period of time helps to build strong readers.
- Learning Centers – Independent and collaborative literacy activities reinforce and build literacy skills that are aligned with state standards.
- Teacher Read-aloud – The daily reading of quality texts builds a reading community while introducing students to a variety of authors and genres.

Writing in the ELA Classroom

Writing is an important and natural component of our Balanced Literacy classroom, as students frequently respond in writing to the texts they are reading. Students have ample opportunities to write in multiple genres throughout the year.

Reading outside the Classroom: The “30 Minutes Daily” Reading Assignment

Our students are expected to read a minimum of 30 minutes outside of the classroom. Research consistently demonstrates that reading and writing skills improve through reading. To promote and encourage life-long readers, our students have access to a well-stocked classroom library from which they can borrow books. In addition, they visit the Media Center often to explore and borrow books that interest them. There is never a shortage of “take home” reading material at CMS!

Understanding Your Child’s Reading “Level”

To help students grow as readers and to assist teachers in planning and instruction, many schools use a form of measurement to determine a student’s current reading level and to measure reading growth over time. Ideally, a student’s reading level will align with or exceed his or her grade level. At Clayton Middle School, we use “Lexiles” to determine a student’s reading level. For more information about reading Lexiles, please visit the link below.

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/reading-resources/book-selection-tips/lexile-levels-made-easy.html>

At CMS, your child takes reading assessments throughout the year through the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). The SRI is a computerized assessment that takes about 45 minutes during which students read a variety of passages and respond to questions that follow. A student’s ability to comprehend the passage and decipher the vocabulary presented helps to measure the child’s reading ability, which is translated into a Lexile score.

Literacy Resources for Families

The following resources may be helpful in assisting your child with reading strategies and with finding quality reading material.

New Jersey State Library – Family Literacy Resources

https://www.njstatelib.org/services_for_libraries/consulting_services/youth_services/family_literacy/

U.S. Department of Education - Reading Resources

<https://www2.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml>

Popular Books for Middle School Students

<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/middle-grade>

New York Times Best Selling Books for Children

<https://www.rifflebooks.com/list/27892>