



Dear Families,

Welcome to your first middle school English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) class! We are excited about our plans this year, and we look forward to working with you. This year we hope to support our students' development as critical readers and writers through reader's and writer's workshop and with multiple opportunities for them to engage with a variety of texts. By the end of this school year, our students will be prepared for success in their future ELAR classes.

Our ELAR TEKS, the foundation of our curriculum, ask students to engage in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking. Additionally, students will no longer have a textbook in their middle school ELAR classroom; rather, they have access to a classroom library of grade-appropriate texts to further their engagement as readers and writers. We hope that by moving away from a textbook, students will have the opportunity to engage with texts of their choosing, thereby developing within them a love of reading.

The emphasis in the first half of this unit will be on teaching students to find books that get them excited to read, widening the scope of what they are reading, and building stamina in independent reading. Students will learn that reading should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience as long as the reader has the right book in his or her hands. In the second half of the unit, students will learn how to analyze characters, plots, themes, and author's craft across texts. Ultimately, the goal of this unit is for students to learn to visualize elements of the text, monitor their own comprehension when they read independently, and make connections between the words on the page and the world around them. The unit will also tap into students' motivation to write based on interesting topics. Writers will practice collecting ideas, drafting in their writer's notebooks, and narrowing down bigger thinking into smaller, manageable pieces by writing flash drafts. Most importantly, students will familiarize themselves with the workshop model they will be using throughout the course of the entire year. This unit will lay the groundwork for other types of writing students will be doing both throughout the year and in future high-stakes writing.

During the first six weeks, all sixth grade ELA students in EMS ISD will have two writing assessments that will be given before and after the writing unit. Teachers will use these assessments to drive instructional decisions and measure growth in writing over the course of the year. Moreover, these assessments create an opportunity for teachers to evaluate their students' ability to transfer the skills that have been taught when students write independently. This approach reflects our goal of nurturing great writers rather than simply producing great pieces of writing. The first writing assessment will be administered at the beginning of the unit and is designed to provide information for teachers about individual student needs as they plan for instruction. The second writing piece becomes their published writing at the end of the unit. This creates an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they have learned during the unit. The published piece will be graded using a common standards-based rubric. Students will also complete a common reading and revising/editing assessment during the unit.

We encourage you to speak with your students about what they are reading, writing, and learning in class. Be sure to continually review their performance via Skyward Access.

Respectfully,

EMS-ISD 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ELAR Teachers