THE FLORIDA BENCHMARKS FOR EXCELLENT STUDENT THINKING (B.E.S.T.) STANDARDS

Parent Guide for Grade 8 English Language Arts

PREPARING FLORIDA CHILDREN FOR A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

The B.E.S.T. Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) are literacy standards for Florida students that will shape their education and make Florida the most literate state in the nation. The B.E.S.T. Standards will pave the way for Florida students to receive a world-class education and prepare them for a successful future.

THESE STANDARDS EMPHASIZE:

- Explicit and systematic phonics instruction
- Critical thinking skills
- A deep respect for literature from historic time periods
- Knowledge building through content-rich texts

Education leaders across the state of Florida improved the academic content standards, creating new expectations for what students need to know and be able to do. These benchmarks are goals that students are expected to achieve by the end of the school year. The B.E.S.T. Standards are designed to ensure that **all** students reach their greatest potential.

Preparing your child for success begins in Kindergarten and continues as your child moves up through each grade. This guide will support parents and families with children in eighth grade by helping you:

LEARN about the B.E.S.T. Standards and why they matter for your child.

TALK with your child's teachers about what he/she will be learning in the classroom.

LOCATE activities and resources to support your child's learning in practical ways at home.

UNDERSTAND important educational (academic) words that you will see in your child's grade-level standards.

LEARN ABOUT THE EIGHTH GRADE STANDARDS

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS IN EIGHTH GRADE:

- Demonstrating an understanding of spoken words, syllables and sounds.
- Knowing and applying strategies to decode/encode (taking words apart/putting words together) multisyllabic words.
- Reading grade-level texts with accuracy, automaticity and appropriate prosody or expression.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EXPECTATIONS:

- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.
- Read and comprehend grade-level complex texts proficiently.
- Make inferences to support comprehension.
- Use appropriate collaborative techniques and active listening skills when engaging in discussions in a variety of situations.
- Use the accepted rules governing a specific format to create quality work.
- Use appropriate voice and tone when speaking or writing.

SUPPORT LEARNING AT HOME

You can encourage learning English language arts at home in ways that are fun for you and your child. Try these ideas after school, on weekends and during the summer:

- ✓ Encourage your child to use book trailers to select a first, second and third choice to read. Ask him/her to tell you why and how each video made a book sound interesting. Go to the library to check out and read those top choices.
- ✓ Set up and carry out a family debate night on a topic that interests your child. Incorporate the principles of argument into your more informal discussions with your child.
- ✓ Encourage your student to see, understand and explain both sides of situations or conflicts.
- ✓ Find and post a family word of the week or month. Learn the word and use it in conversations with one another as well as written communication when opportunities arise.
- ✓ Be frequent visitors to your local public library. Let him/her see you choosing, checking out and enjoying books. Work with your child to develop a personal résumé and portfolio and practice filling out electronic applications.

EIGHTH GRADE SUGGESTED BOOK LIST



9/11 Address to the Nation by George W. Bush
Parsley by Rita Dove
The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
I Will Always Write Back by Caitlin Alifirenka and Liz Welch
Swiss Family Robinson by Johann David Wyss
The Princess and the Goblin by George MacDonald
A Day that Will Live in Infamy by Franklin Roosevelt
The Bells by Edgar Allan Poe
We Real Cool by Gwendolyn Brooks
Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela
Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon by Catherine Thimmesh
The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane by Russell Freedman
Ain't I a Woman? by Sojourner Truth
The Cremation of Sam McGee by Robert Service
What Does American Democracy Mean to Me? by Mary McLeod Bethune
Rip Van Winkle by Washington Irving
The Call of the Wild by Jack London
Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe
Blessings of Liberty and Education by Frederick Douglass
The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry
Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
Shane by Jack Schaefer
The Chosen by Chaim Potok
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Introduction to Poetry by Billy Collins
The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by Gawain Poet (unknown)
The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien
Trapped by Marc Aronson

SUPPLEMENTAL READING OPTIONS

The Story of Doctor Dolittle
by Hugh Lofting

The Neverending Story
by Michael Ende

The Hound of the Baskervilles
by Arthur Conan Doyle

The Call of the Wild
by Jack London

A Wrinkle in Time
by Madeleine L'Engle

I Am Malala
by Malala Yousafzai

Matilda
by Roald Dahl

The Age of Fable
by Thomas Bulfinch

The Hiding Place
by Corrie ten Boom

Island of the Blue Dolphins
by Scott O'Dell

Where the Red Fern Grows
by Wilson Rawls

The Count of Monte Cristo
by Alexandre Dumas

TALK TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Now that your child has reached middle school, he/she should be taking on more responsibility for his/her own learning. Parent/teacher conferences may be led by your student. Look for those conferences to focus on examples of student work. Together, talk about ways this work is successful as well as possible ways your student can continue to learn and grow as a reader and effective communicator.

EDUCATIONAL (ACADEMIC) WORDS TO KNOW

ANALYZE: To study or examine something in detail in order to discover more about it.

ARGUMENT: A coherent series of reasons, statements or facts intended to support or establish a point of view.

AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE: In informational text, the author's attitude toward a topic or subject.

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE: The reason an author has for writing a text and engaging their audience; these reasons often overlap (e.g., persuade, inform, entertain).

CENTRAL IDEA: The most important or central thought unifying elements of a text.

EPIC (POEM): A long narrative poem in elevated style recounting the deeds of a legendary or historic hero.

EVALUATE: To judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount or value of something.

EXPOSITORY: Explaining or describing something.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Language characterized by figures of speech (e.g., metaphor, symbolism).

INFER: To form an opinion from evidence; to reach a conclusion based on known facts.

NARRATIVE: Something (as a story) that is told in full detail.

PARAPHRASE: To say something that someone else has said or written using different words.

PERSPECTIVE: A particular attitude toward or way of regarding something.

RHETORIC: The art or skill of speaking or writing formally and effectively especially as a way to persuade or influence people.

RHETORICAL APPEALS: The writing an author uses to appeal to credibility, ethics, moral principles, time, place, logic, reason and/or emotion.

SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION: A carefully thought out and planned sequence of instruction.

TEXT: Anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it.

TEXT FEATURES: The components of a story or article that are not the main body of the text, including the table of contents, index, glossary, headings, bold words, sidebars, pictures and captions and labeled diagrams.

TEXT STRUCTURES: Structures used to organize information in a text (e.g., chronology, comparison and cause and effect).

THEME: The underlying message or big idea of a talk, book, film or other work.