

## Supporting Your Student in English Language Arts

The way we taught students in the past simply does not prepare them for the higher demands of college and careers today and in the future. Schools are working to improve teaching and learning to ensure that all students will graduate high school with the skills they need to be successful.

In English Language Arts, this means three major changes. Students will continue reading and writing. But in addition to stories and literature, they will read more texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas including science and social studies. They will read more challenging texts and be asked more questions that will require them to refer back to what they have read. There will also be an increased emphasis on building a strong vocabulary so that students can read and understand challenging material.

### Supporting Students in Elementary English Language Arts:

#### Primary Grades

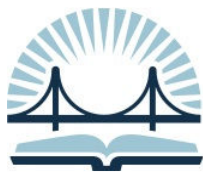
- Read to your student and have him or her read to you every day for at least 15 minutes. Pick out words that might be new or words that have multiple or complex meanings. Discuss those words and how they add to what the writer is saying.
- Ask your student to retell a story in his or her own words by telling what happened first, second, third, etc. In addition, ask your student to think about what the message of a story may be or what he or she learned from an informational book or article.
- Look for opportunities in everyday places to build your student's vocabulary.

#### Upper Grades:

- Provide time and space for your student to read independently. This time should be free from distractions such as television.
- Ask your student what topics, events, or activities he or she likes. Then look for books, magazines, or other materials about those topics that would motivate your student to read.
- Start a family book club. Let different members of the family pick the book. This could be a good way to enjoy quality family time while experiencing the joy of reading together!

#### All Elementary Grades:

- Be sure your student has a library card. Children should select books they are interested in to develop a passion for reading. Many libraries have book clubs and family activities that make reading fun for the entire family.
- Use technology to help build your student's interest in reading. There are several websites where students can read books or articles online. The computer will help with words the student cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers students can use to access those sites. Feel free to ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.



## **Supporting Students in Middle School English Language Arts:**

- Provide time and space for your student to read independently. This time should be free from distractions such as television.
- Ask your student what he or she learned from reading. Have him or her read the most interesting or useful sections aloud, and discuss how that knowledge can be used in real life.
- Assist your student in using references such as the Internet or a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words.
- Keep track of the time that your student spends reading every day. Note what kind of reading materials he or she likes (books, magazines, newspaper articles, the Internet, etc.). Then look for additional materials that would encourage your student to read more and/or subscribe to magazines or look for books or other materials about those topics that would motivate your student to read.
- It is also helpful when your student sees other people reading at home. You could share what you have read.
- Make time for conversation at home. Discuss current events, shared interests, and future aspirations for education and career.
- Visit museums, zoos, theaters, historical sites, aquariums, and other educational places to help increase your student's exposure to new knowledge and vocabulary.
- Be sure your student has a library card. Students should select books they are interested in to develop a passion for reading. Many libraries have book clubs and family activities that make reading fun for the entire family.
- Use technology to help build your student's interest in reading. There are several websites where students can read books or articles online. The computer will help with words the student cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers students can use to access those sites. Feel free to ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

## **Supporting Students in High School English Language Arts:**

- Increase time for conversation at home. Discuss classroom assignments, activities, and homework. Ask your student how he or she is doing in class and how you can help.
- Ask your student about his or her academic goals and career interests. Assist in gathering various sources of information on college and career opportunities.
- Begin to explore colleges and other postsecondary options that are of interest to your student.

Don't be afraid to reach out to your student's teacher—you are still an important part of your student's education. Ask to see samples of your student's work and discuss his or her progress with the teacher using questions like:

- Is my student becoming an effective writer?
- Is my student becoming more skilled at reading and understanding challenging material?
- What extra support can I provide at home to reinforce what you are teaching in class?
- How can I ensure that my student is developing good study habits for high school and beyond?