Appendix C

Current Research Practices

6-8

The Milltown School District's English Language Arts Department strives to deliver the highest quality instruction in a literate environment that utilizes and employs best practices in English Literacy based on current research and recent data with careful attention to advanced multiple literacies and integrating opportunities for listening speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking. The program appropriately both challenges and supports learners of all levels and materials are comprised of literary and informational texts as well as classic and contemporary literature while reflecting different genres, including digital media. The ELA department provides uninterrupted daily literacy instruction of 80 minutes for all students in grades 6 through 8. Strategies instruction to promote independence in critical thinking, inquiry and inference is core to the program. *Notice and Note* Strategies for close reading of both fiction and nonfiction are tools offered to students. (Beers & Probst 2012/2016) Opportunities to extensively practices strategies related to: author's purpose, cause/effect, contextual clues, drawing conclusions, fact vs. opinion, main idea, predictions, inferencing, paraphrasing and summarizing are provided regularly. Training and repeated practice using metacognition, activation of prior knowledge, building of schema and visualization strategies work to promote the strongest comprehension on the critical and influential levels.   Socially collaborative discussions using debate and Socratic seminar and other collegial formats (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) are integrated into literary units to promote and refine skills related to effective presentation of knowledge and ideas. Students have regular opportunities to write about their reading using annotations and text based evidence.

Our ELA department employs a comprehensive Balanced Literacy/Writers Workshop approach to English Language Arts instruction. Balanced literacy includes the read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading along with explicit instruction in Vocabulary development.

BALANCED LITERACY COMPONENTS

Read Aloud
Using carefully selected rich, diverse and thematic fiction and nonfiction texts, teacher reads aloud to students to model fluency, inflection and differentiation.
Shared Reading: Teacher provides whole-class explicit instruction through a mini-lesson while reading a shared, grade level, rich text. Students write about their reading using specific evidence and textual support.

Guided Reading
Teacher works with a small group of students, using instructional level texts, as they practice and apply previously taught strategies and skills.
Independent Reading: Students independently read self-selected books that they can and will read.

Working With Words
Teachers and students engage in an integrated study of phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, academic language and vocabulary. Our integrated word study to enhance vocabulary utilizes a text based approach that incorporates meaning, contextual clues, word parts, and visualization.   Our vocabulary work is supplemented with the Sadlier *Vocabulary Workshop* texts for each grade level.

Using the Workshop Model, our Writing program provides direct and small group instruction in the writing process and grade-level language skills through genre based writing activities using the narrative, opinion/argument, explanatory/informative, and research pieces. Skills are appropriately sequenced and reflect a progression of skills to account for student development and growth. Instruction in and support for all steps in the Writing Process and craft and structure are expressly provided. Proven strategies and techniques like; freewriting, quick writes, illustration, modeling, repeated practice, write alouds, assist students in the planning, drafting and revision stages. Peer to peer and teacher to student conferencing is used as a key strategy to support student growth as writers. Form and function of the

conventions of academic English and features of informal written communication, speech and electronic communication for realistic and different audiences and purposes as well as grammar and mechanics in context are progressively refined. The curriculum allows for students to conduct short as well as more sustained research projects, utilizing an inquiry-based research process, based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation in order to integrate knowledge and ideas. Students are offered a myriad of resources, including our school library, to locate relevant and credible sources as support for research pieces. Students are able to create original poetry and compile an end of the year portfolio that displays student selected best work.

The philosophy of shared responsibility for literacy development with purposeful connections across subject areas using common language and techniques when writing across the curriculum and fostering reading strategies that relate to primary and secondary sources in the content areas in order to strengthen students' educational outcomes is mutual among departments.

Technology is infused in all areas of the Language Arts curriculum on all levels in order to enrich technological performance in the areas of word processing, internet usage, presentation skills and file management. Digital tools using the Google Platform support the Writing process. Students utilize proper formatting, line spacing and online revision tools to make necessary revisions while following the MLA format when publishing formal written pieces. Students are able to explore internet resources, conduct detailed searches to gather information from electronic sources, maneuver between multiple sites while recognizing validity and credibility of sources. Students effectively manage files using appropriate naming and location while efficiently utilizing folders to organize their digital work electronically. Students use technological tools to enhance presentations while employing strategies to best engage their audiences using visuals, style and format appropriate to their task.