

## Culture Matters

Teachers must be able to *CONNECT* with their learners before they can share core content. Teachers teach learners, not subjects. To truly engage learners, we must reach out to them in ways that are culturally & linguistically responsive and appropriate, and we must examine the cultural assumptions and stereotypes we bring into the classroom that may hinder interconnectedness.



# Parents' Guide to Support Learner Success

## EMPOWERING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THE COMMON CORE CHALLENGE AT HOME

8TH GRADE

As practitioners in education and facilitators of cultural competency training, we know that in order for learners to be successful in today's schools, parents need to be knowledgeable of the most effective ways to support learning at home. Educators can work collaboratively to assist their learners to be more successful, by tapping into support from home. This guide, which provides an overview of what your child will learn by the end of each grade level in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, prepares your child to be ready to succeed in the next grade level. This guide is based on the new Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by 44 states (*at time of publication*). The Common Core State Standards are much more rigorous than the previously held standards amongst the states. In order to compete globally, our nation needs to increase critical thinking skills in our children.

This guide is designed to offer parents with creative ways to become involved in supporting their child's education as well as ways to communicate the expectations of the Common Core State Standards. If your child is meeting the expectations outlined in these standards, he or she will be prepared for high school.

## WHY ARE ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

The academic standards are important because they help ensure that all learners, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and in their chosen careers. Rigorous standards provide an important first step – a clear roadmap and process for learning – to be utilized by a collaborative team of facilitators of learning, parents, and learners. Having clearly defined goals helps families and facilitators of learning work together to ensure that learners succeed. They also will help your child develop critical thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.



## A Snapshot of What Your Child Will Be Concentrating on in 8th Grade

### English Language Arts & Literacy

In 8th grade, learners will read chief works of fiction and nonfiction from all over the world and from different time periods. They will continue to learn how to understand what they read and assess an author's assumptions and assertions. They will also execute research that will require the analysis of resources and accurate interpretation of literary and informational text. Activities in these areas will embrace:

- Identifying what a reading selection explicitly says and drawing inferences based on evidence from the book, article, poem or play
- Analyzing the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts
- Evaluating the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient
- Analyzing where materials on the same topic disagree on matters of fact, interpretation, or point of view
- Connecting information and ideas efficiently and effectively in writing
- Analyzing the purpose of information presented in diverse media formats, such as print, TV, web, video clips or interactive maps and evaluating its social, political, or commercial motives
- Participating in class discussions on a range of topics, texts, and issues by expressing ideas and building on the ideas of others
- Developing a large vocabulary of multi-use academic words and phrases
- Using strong, active verbs to create a clear picture for the reader (i.e., *walk, skip, stroll, meander, lurch, limp*)
- Building writing around strong central ideas or points of view; supporting the ideas with sound reasoning and evidence, precise word choices, smooth transitions, and different sentence structures
- Planning and conducting research projects that include several steps and use many credible and documented print and digital sources
- Interpreting figures of speech, such as puns or verbal irony, in context (A "pun" is a humorous way of using a word or phrase so that more than one meaning is suggested. For example, "The best way to communicate with fish is to drop them a line." "Verbal irony" is when words are used to say something other than their usual meaning. For example, calling something "As clear as mud" in order to say something isn't clear at all.
- Presenting findings and claims to others, emphasizing key points with relevant evidence and sound reasoning, adapting speech to the audience and the formality of the setting, and responding to questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas



## Partner with your child's teacher to have a focused conversation about learning

When you talk with your child's teacher keep in mind that you and your child's teacher are partners; a part of a team which includes your child. You are an important part of your child's education. Time may be limited and you can't cover everything. Therefore, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In 8th grade for literacy, these include:

- Reading closely and citing several sources of evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction works that most strongly supports an analysis of the material
- Developing a rich vocabulary of complex and sophisticated words and using them to speak and write more precisely and coherently
- Be prepared to ask the teacher questions like:
  - Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
  - How is my child doing in writing?
  - In what areas is my child excelling?
  - What do you suppose is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
  - What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?
  - If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside of the classroom?

## Mathematics

In 8th grade, learners will take their understanding of unit rates and proportional relationships to a new level, connecting these concepts to point on a line and ultimately using them to solve linear equations that require them to apply algebraic reasoning as well as knowledge of the properties of operations. Learners will also expand their understanding of numbers beyond rational numbers to include numbers that are irrational – meaning that they cannot be written as a simple fraction, such as the square root of 2 or  $\sqrt{2}$ . Activities in these areas will embrace:

- Understanding that every *rational* number (such as  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 0, 3, 2, or -2) can be written as a decimal, but that the decimal form of an *irrational* number (such as  $\sqrt{2}$ ) is both non-repeating and infinite
- Applying the properties of exponents to generate equivalent numerical expressions
- Determining the value of square roots of small perfect squares (such as  $\sqrt{25}=5$ ) and cube roots of small perfect cubes (such as  $\sqrt[3]{64}=4$ )
- Graphing proportional relationships and interpreting the unit rate as the *slope* (how steep or flat a line is)

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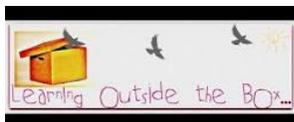
- Solving and graphing one- and two-variable linear equations
- Solving linear equations (i.e.,  $-x + 5(x = \frac{1}{3}) = 2x - 8$ ); solving pairs of linear equations (i.e.,  $x + 6y = -1$  and  $2x - 2y = 12$ ); and writing equations to solve related word problems
- Understanding that a *function* is a rule that assigns to each value of  $x$  exactly one value of  $y$ , such as  $y=2x$ , a rule that would yield such ordered pairs as  $(-2,-4)$ ,  $(3,6)$  and  $(4,8)$
- Comparing the properties of two functions represented in different ways (in a table, graph, equation, or description)
- Determining *congruence* (when shapes are of equal size and shape) and *similarity* (same shape but different sizes)
- Learning and applying the Pythagorean Theorem (an equation relating the lengths of the sides of a right triangle:  $a^2 + b^2 + c^2$ )
- Solving problems involving the volume of cylinders, cones, and spheres



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- Linear equations with one and two variables
- Functions
- Congruence and similarity of geometric figures
- Be prepared to ask the teacher questions like:
  - Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
  - In what areas is my child excelling?
  - What do you suppose is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
  - What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?
  - If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside of the classroom?



All learning does not take place in the classroom, nor should it. Learning must continue at home, encouraging learners to “think outside the box.” Try to create a quiet place for your child to study, and set aside time *every day* when your child can concentrate. You should also set aside 15 to 30 minutes each week to sit down with your child, while he or she completes homework. This will help you to stay in tuned with what your child is working on, and it will help you to be the first to know if your child needs assistance with specific topics. Furthermore, here are some activities you can do with your child to support successful learning at home:

### English Language Arts & Literacy

- Provide time and space for your child to read independently. This reading time should be free from distractions such as television and gaming activities.
- Ask your child what topics, events, or activities he or she likes. Based upon that information subscribe to magazines or look for books or other materials about those topics that would motivate your child to read.
- Model reading at home. It is helpful when your child sees other people reading at home. You can share what you have read.
- Make time for conversation at home. Discuss what is current in the news, shared interests, and your child’s future aspirations as to where to attend college and careers.
- Visit museums, zoos, theaters, historical sites, aquariums, and other educational places to help increase your child’s exposure to new knowledge and vocabulary.
- Use technology to help strengthen your child’s interest in reading. Ask your child’s teacher for suggestions of websites where learners can read books or articles on line. The computer will help with words the learner cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers learners can use to access those sites.
- In today’s world everyone in the family remains busy. It is important however, to make time for family discussions about things going on around the world. Weekends can be a chance for everyone to catch up.
- Visit the campus of a local college with your teen. Begin talking about college early. What does he or she expect from college? What high school courses will your teen need to pass to prepare for college?

### Mathematics

- Ask your teen to conduct an Internet search to determine how mathematics is used in specific careers. This could lead to an enlightening discussion and allow learners to begin thinking about their future aspirations.
- Have your child use magazines, clip art, and other pictures to find and describe examples of *similar* and *congruent* figures.

- Using different objects or containers (such as a can of coffee or a box of tissues), ask your teen to estimate surface area and volume, and check the answer together.
- Encourage your child to persevere, “sticking to it” whenever a problem seems difficult. This will help your child see that **everyone** can learn math.
- Prompt your teen to face challenges positively and to see mathematics as a subject that is important. Avoid statements like “*I didn’t like math either*” or “*I agree, math is too hard.*”
- Praise for your child’s efforts in solving problems or understanding something for the first time.
- Ask your child to share with you any work he or she is doing in math class that strikes him or her as interesting. Some possibilities might include:
  - Solving interesting problems involving cylinders and spheres, or how many earths would fit inside the sun.
  - Analyzing data with a scatterplot, for example to decide whether eating and obesity are related.



For more information go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)  
*the official online home of the Common Core State Standards*