



**In the Southbridge Public Schools, ALL students will experience a world class education, and will graduate as engaged citizens who demonstrate essential skills required for success in college and career.**

## **Elements of an Effective English Language Arts Lesson**

***We believe that effective reading instruction engages students in text and rigorous learning tasks that develop on-grade level reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.***

### **Complex texts are the center of lessons.**

English Language Arts at Southbridge are about helping students become better readers, writers, and thinkers. Lessons are spent on students reading, writing, and speaking about texts that are at or above quantitative and qualitative complexity levels expected for the grade and time. These texts, from the Guidebooks, expose students to a variety of different genres, subjects, and contexts.

### **Students must engage with the text to answer meaningful questions/tasks that push students to think more deeply about the text than they would on their own.**

- Questions require text evidence to answer.
- Questions guide students to think about the author's purpose and choices – not about their own opinions.
- Students are given time to talk about the text, using evidence and explaining how the evidence supports their interpretation. Students talk and ask questions about each others' thinking, in order to clarify or improve their understanding.
- Good questions guide students to the macro level of understanding the structure or theme of the text as a whole. Good questions guide students to the micro level of understanding how a specific word or sentence is important in developing the text as a whole. Teachers should prompt thinking at all levels – the word, sentence, paragraph, section, and whole text level.

### **Students engage in the struggle.**

- We go beyond the I-we-you do approach to teaching in which students watch a teacher model and then imitate the teacher's approach. Effective reading lessons put the thinking on the students and we actively work towards supporting that student struggle.
- Students need to be challenged to consider the merit of their own and their teammates' thinking based on whether there is text evidence to support that interpretation.
- Students must use what they know to struggle with and logically attack a new question that requires them to integrate the text, not focus on one strategy or skill in isolation. If students fail, then the teacher may provide more scaffolding through guided questions, but the class must have a chance to succeed through struggle.
- Students must be pushed to articulate their thinking, even when that articulation is a struggle.

**All students are engaged throughout the lesson; they are engaged in the work, engaged in learning from others, and engaged in monitoring, articulating, and refining their own thinking.**



- Engagement doesn't mean every hand is up but it does mean every student is tracking the conversation and able to contribute at any moment, actively listening in order to clarify, build on, or challenge each others' thinking.
- Students should be participating meaningfully at many times throughout the lesson; this could be achieved through cold calling, partner or group talks, quick writes, or other means built into the guidebooks curriculum.