

## Core Syllabus 2011–2012 (Lanigan)

Core is a three-period block during which students work on reading/literature (called “language arts” on report cards), writing, and social studies. At Da Vinci, each Core is a multi-age class that includes sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. The curriculum rotates on a three-year cycle. In this the first year of the social studies cycle, students learn about ancient cultures. We will use the EMC Paradigm materials for reading and writing, as well as novels, a wide range of other literary and expository texts, and poetry. There are two major schedule changes this year that affect curriculum planning: the District’s shift to quarters from trimesters, and the new block schedule here at Da Vinci. In September, we are impacted somewhat by sending our sixth graders to Outdoor School a month earlier for a three-day, as opposed to the old five-day, program.

### Curriculum Overview

	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>	<b>January</b>
<b>Writing</b>	Where I’m From Poem Neighborhood Narrative	Literary Analysis– Compare two poems	Short Stories (Imaginative or Narrative Mode)  Fall Current Event Due	Short Stories (Imaginative or Narrative Mode)	On-Demand Writing
<b>Reading</b>	Tuck Everlasting Neighborhood/Childhood Narratives	Novel Group 1 (10/12, 10/19, 10/26, 11/2)  Poetry	Short Stories  Fall Novel Project Due	Short Stories	Novel Group 2 (1/11, 1/18, 1/25, 2/1)
<b>Social Studies</b>	Cultural Universals  DIG Simulation  World Geography Review	Finish DIG  Early Humans	Ancient Egypt and the Near East	Ancient Egypt and the Near East  Ancient India	Ancient India

	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>
<b>Writing</b>	Persuasive Essay	Expository Speeches  Winter Current Event Due	Mythology	Poetry	Grocery List Characters  Spring Current Event Due
<b>Reading</b>	Novel Group 3  Nonfiction	Nonfiction  Winter Novel Project Due	Mythology  Greek Drama	Novel Group 4  Poetry	Poetry  Spring Novel Project Due

<b>Social Studies</b>	Ancient China	Ancient Greece	Ancient Greece Museum Storyline	Ancient Rome	Ancient Rome
-----------------------	---------------	----------------	------------------------------------	--------------	--------------

## Homework

The main homework is at least three hours per week of independent reading, which is documented on a signed home reading log. Other homework will be finishing class assignments, doing projects (with directions and notice), studying for tests, and preparing one current events presentation and one novel project per season. See the Expectations handout for more information.

## Weekly Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday (block day with even periods only)	Thursday (block day with odd periods only)	Friday
Openers: vocabulary; style, grammar, and conventions; poetry reading and response; journal writing; mentor sentences				
Announcements and planner				
Independent Reading	Current Events	Literature Circles: Novels or short texts	Current Events	Independent Reading
Reading/Writing (reading texts are typically used as models for writing assignments)			Reading/Writing (reading texts are typically used as models for writing assignments)	
Instructional Break (10 minutes for getting a drink, using the restroom, socializing, and/or having a nutritious snack brought from home; occasionally, this break is outside)				
Teacher Read Aloud				
Social Studies				

## Grading and Assessment

The district uses letter grades for middle school. The cut scores at Da Vinci are:

A+	97-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F	less than 60%
A	93-96%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%		
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%		

In reading, the term grade is based on novel projects (three times per year with grades posted second, third and fourth quarters); written and performance assessments; reading logs; novel group journals; minor assignments; and class participation in discussion and independent reading time.

The writing grade is based on formal assignments (usually two per quarter); the Openers journal; Word Work assignments; mentor sentence activities; current events presentations (three times per year with grades posted second, third, and fourth quarters); and effort in terms of use of class time, participation in editing groups, and timeliness of drafts.

In history, the grade is based on formal unit assessments (one or two per quarter); the Interactive Student Notebook for daily work; class participation; and minor assignments.

I use a point system for all grades. This allows me to use relative weight for assignments. For example, a weekly reading log is worth 10 points, while a major history test is worth 50 or 60. The more significant the assignment, the more points it is worth, so it has a greater impact on the term grade. This year, all teachers will be using the district's online grade book, EdBox. When this is "live," I will post a link on my webpage that you can click to check your (student's) grades.

Like other Da Vinci teachers, I am also working on improving classroom assessment practices to provide regular, meaningful feedback to students, particularly in writing. This does not imply more testing, but rather implementation of class procedures that help students to see what they are learning and to identify skills for which they need more practice and instruction. The idea is to help students celebrate their successes, understand what they need to work on, and have the confidence to keep working at acquiring new knowledge and skills.

### **Modifications for TAG Students and Students with Special Needs**

There are many opportunities and potential modifications for TAG students and students with special needs. Targeting instruction to each student's rate and level is a high priority in my classroom. In a multi-age class such as this one, differentiation is essential. TAG students in particular benefit from flexible grouping; enrichment assignments; choices of research questions and project options; multiple intelligences options; compacting of the curriculum based on pre-assessment; writers' workshop and individual feedback; and the opportunity to select challenging texts to study in literature circles. If you feel your TAG student needs different modifications than I have provided, please let me know. In addition, rest assured that I follow the goals and modifications listed on students' IEPs and 504 Plans, if applicable. Please contact me if you have any concerns or questions.

## **Electronic Communication**

I will use electronic media to inform families of modifications to the curriculum plan and to provide information about other class assignments as well as other class news. You may access my **web page** as a link on the Da Vinci page. In addition, I send home an **electronic newsletter** and periodic homework reminders to all students and parents for whom I have an email address. Please let me know if you would prefer not to receive these emails or if you are not receiving them and would like to be included on my list. Also, please let me know if you would prefer to use printed information rather than electronic.

## **Contacting the Teacher**

The best way to contact me is via my school email address, which is [alanigan@pps.net](mailto:alanigan@pps.net). You may also use my home email, which is [alanigan@wa-net.com](mailto:alanigan@wa-net.com). I check both addresses daily. In addition, you may stop by Room 208 before school or call the school at (503) 916-5356. Our phone system allows you to leave a private voicemail message for me. You may also make judicious use of my cell phone number: (503) 805-8834. Although I teach mornings only, I am happy to schedule a lunch hour or afternoon appointment with a family, given a day's notice, on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays. I always welcome adult family members in the classroom, especially as volunteers.