

September, 2014

Dear Family,

Welcome to SpringBoard English Language Arts *Grade 6, Unit 1: Stories of Change*.

Overview

In this unit, students explore the skills and features of storytelling in narratives focusing on a change. Two **essential questions** focus their attention on the *skills* and *knowledge* presented and assessed in the unit:

- *How can change be significant?*
- *What makes a good story?*

Students answer these questions through the *activities* and *assessments* in the unit.

Assessments

Using their own experiences and models of narrative texts, student write a personal narrative about an incident in their lives, as well as create an imaginative short story, integrating narrative elements they've identified in their analysis of text. These *two performance-based tasks*, called **Embedded Assessments**, give students an opportunity to demonstrate their new learning in the skills of *writing real and imagined text*. Specifically,

- **Embedded Assessment 1** asks students to *write* a personal narrative.
- **Embedded Assessment 2** asks students to *write* a short story.

In both cases, students demonstrate their ability to organize ideas, develop key concepts, and incorporate narrative elements.

Developing Skills and Knowledge for the Assessments

Throughout the unit, students engage in activities in which they use **strategies** such as *QHT*, *close reading*, *marking the text*, and *adding* to practice the important **skills** of close reading, analyzing narrative elements, and writing real or imagined narratives. Students analyze and discuss a variety of texts such as "Pandora and the Whispering Box," a myth from Ancient Greece, as well as Langston Hughes's short story "Thank You, M'am." Throughout the unit, discussion, brainstorming, and drafting are promoted as ways to develop ideas about and for narratives.

Students' **vocabulary study** concentrates on **academic vocabulary** such as *sequence*, *cause-effect*, and *transitions*, and vocabulary **specific to literary study** such as *simile*, *denotation* and *point of view*.

Helping Your Child

Students should be "practicing" every day in class for their upcoming performance on the Embedded Assessment. Help your child reflect on and focus his or her learning by asking the following questions:

- *What did you learn today? What **texts** did you read, discuss, and respond to in writing? What **strategies** did you use during your reading, discussing, and writing?*
- *What did you learn today that will help you succeed on the upcoming Embedded Assessment? What do you still need to practice?*

You may also find it helpful to read through the **Embedded Assessments** (particularly the **Scoring Guides**) and to note the **Learning Targets** that are located at the beginning of each activity in the unit.

Sincerely,

Patty Qualey