

# Appendix C

## Reports

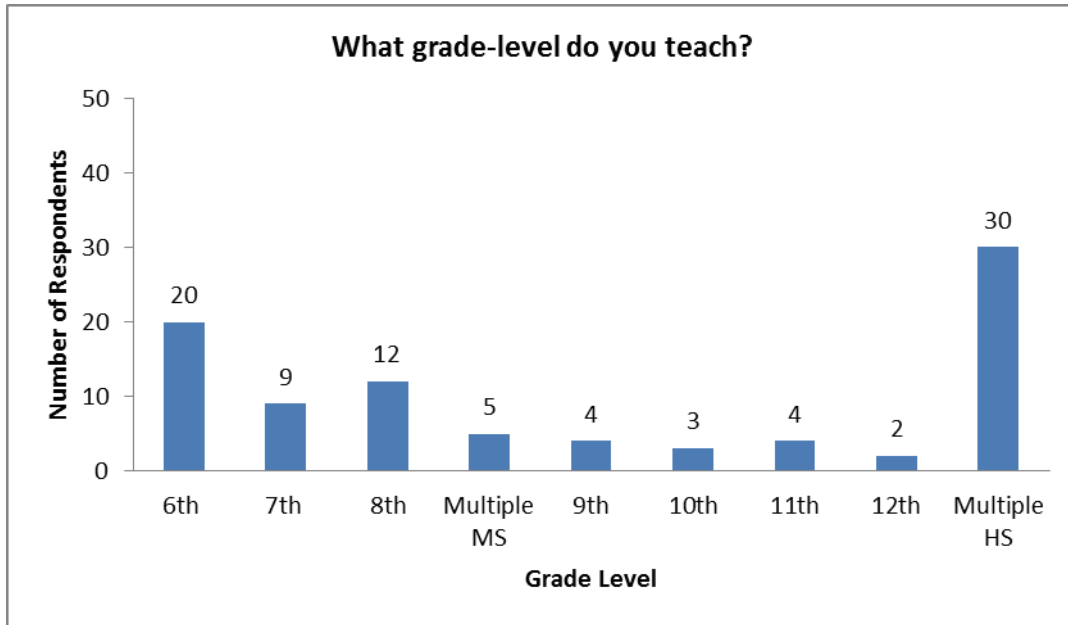
(C1)	ELA Trade Book Survey	Page 1
(C2)	Articulation and Alignment of the APS ELA Program with State Standards and County Policy – Middle School	Page 19
(C3)	Articulation and Alignment of the APS ELA Program with State Standards and County Policy – High School	Page 44
(C4)	ELA Student Interviews	Page 70

## English Language Arts (ELA) Trade Book Survey

In early 2013, Arlington’s 109 middle school and high school English and reading teachers were asked to respond to a survey to identify the types of ELA trade books used during instruction. Eighty-nine teachers participated in the survey, for a response rate of 82 percent. Data in the following report is disaggregated by grade level and/or by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts).

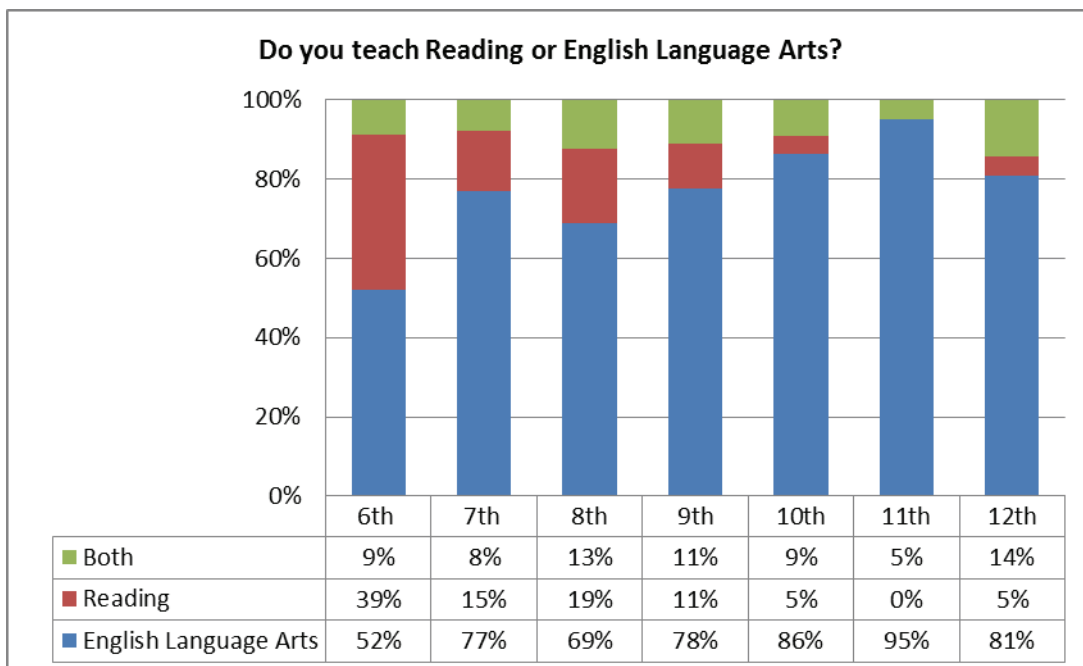
**Figure 1** shows the number of ELA teachers who responded to this survey according to the grade level they teach. Five middle school teachers and thirty high school teachers teach multiple grades.

**Figure 1: Percent of Teachers Responding to the ELA Trade Book Survey by Grade Level**



**Figure 2** shows the percentage of teachers who teach Reading and/or Language Arts by grade level.

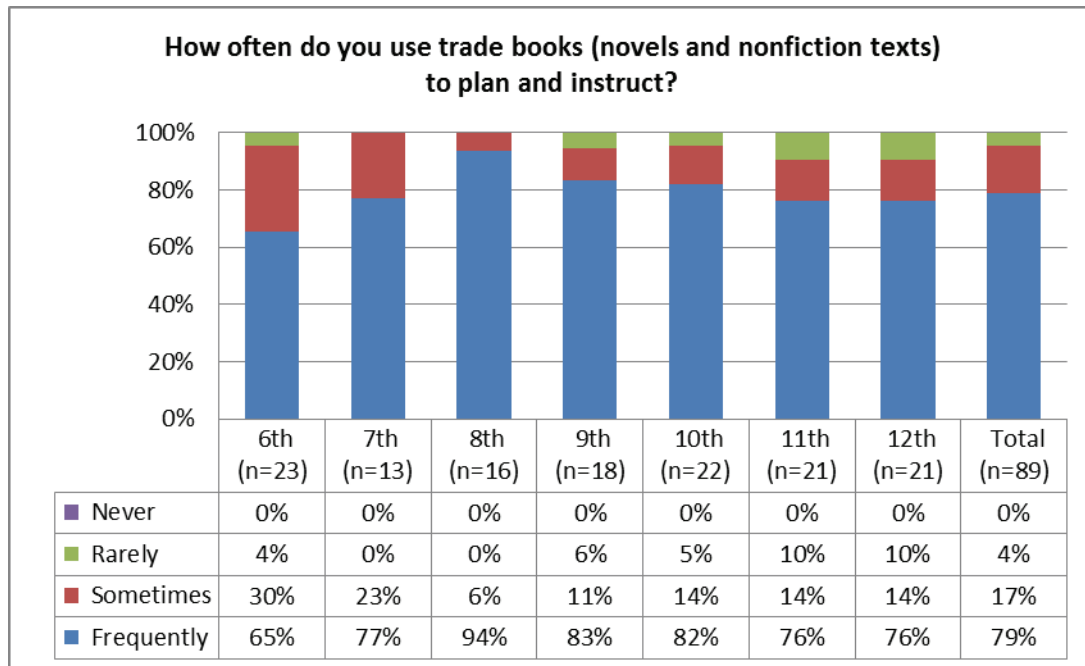
**Figure 2: Percent of Teachers Responding to the ELA Trade Book Survey by Course Type**



It should be noted that a total of 35 respondents teach more than one grade. Their responses, therefore, are included in the data for each grade level but only once in the total. Likewise, 7 respondents teach both Reading and Language Arts. Their responses are include in the data for each course type but only once in the total.

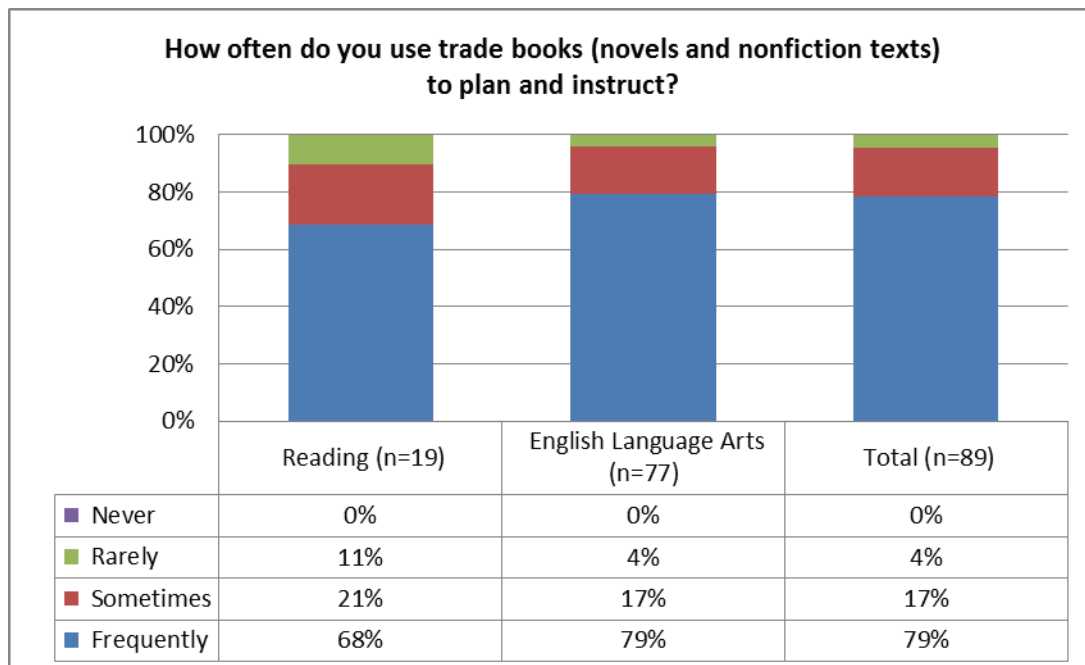
**Figure 3** shows the frequency by grade level that survey respondents utilize trade books to plan instruction.

**Figure 3: Percent of Teachers Using Trade Books to Plan Instruction by Grade Level**



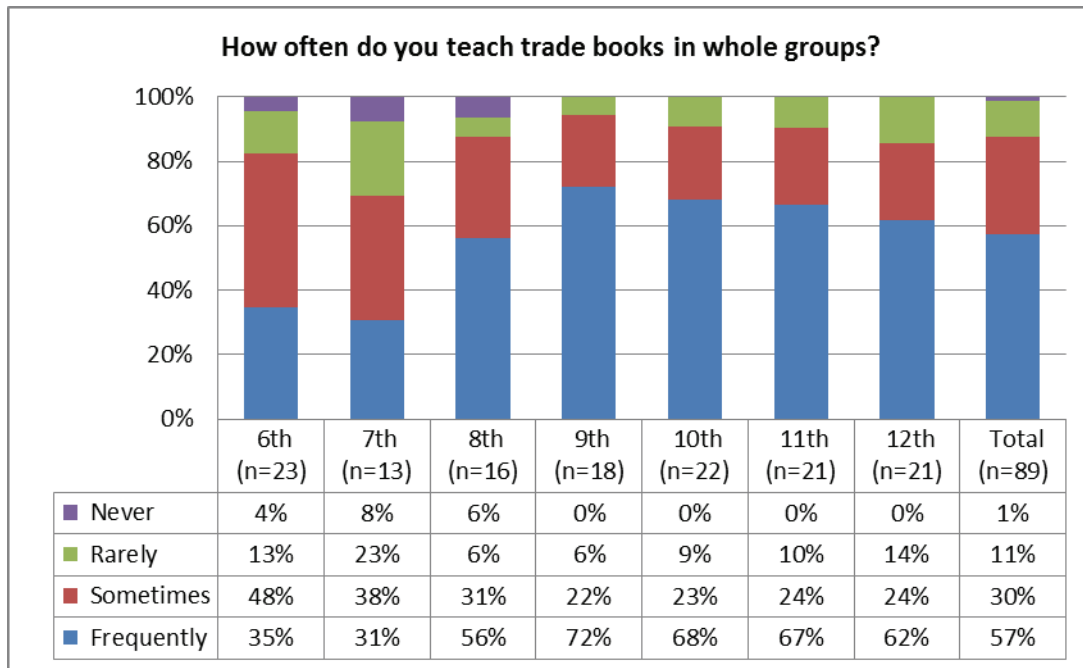
**Figure 4** shows the frequency by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts) that survey respondents utilize trade books to plan instruction.

**Figure 4: Percent of Teachers Using Trade Books to Plan Instruction by Course Type**



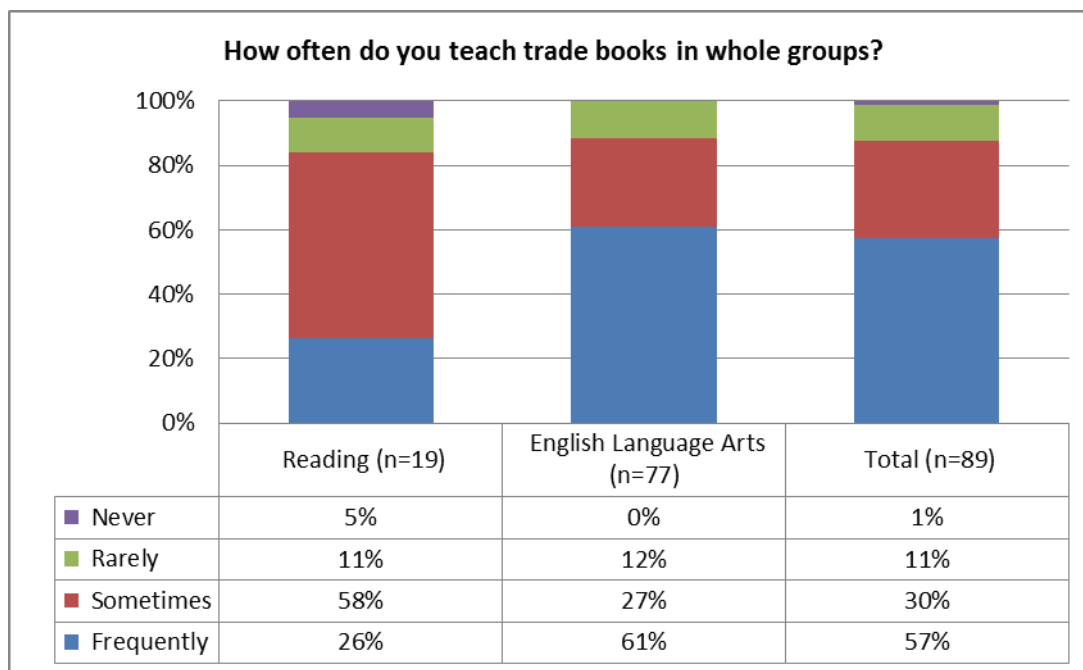
**Figure 5** shows the frequency by grade level that survey respondents teach with trade books to a whole group.

**Figure 5: Percent of Teachers Using Trade Books with Whole Groups by Grade Level**



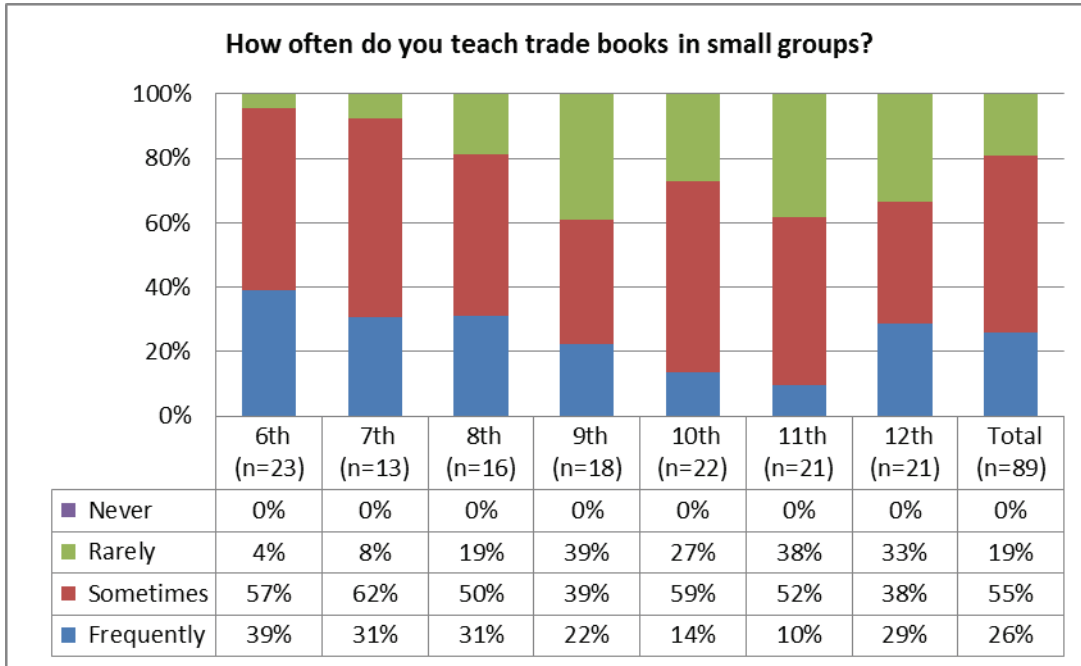
**Figure 6** shows the frequency by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts) that survey respondents teach with trade books to a whole group.

**Figure 6: Percent of Teachers Using Trade Books with Whole Groups by Course Type**



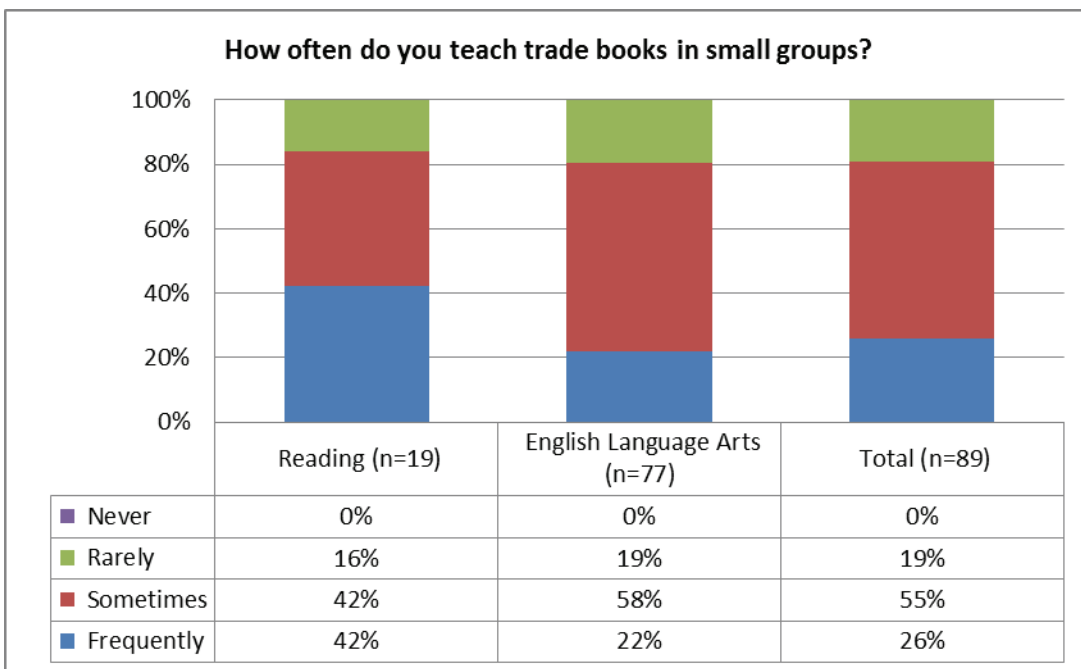
**Figure 7** shows the frequency by grade level that survey respondents teach with trade books to small groups.

**Figure 7: Percent of Teachers Using Trade Books with Small Groups by Grade Level**



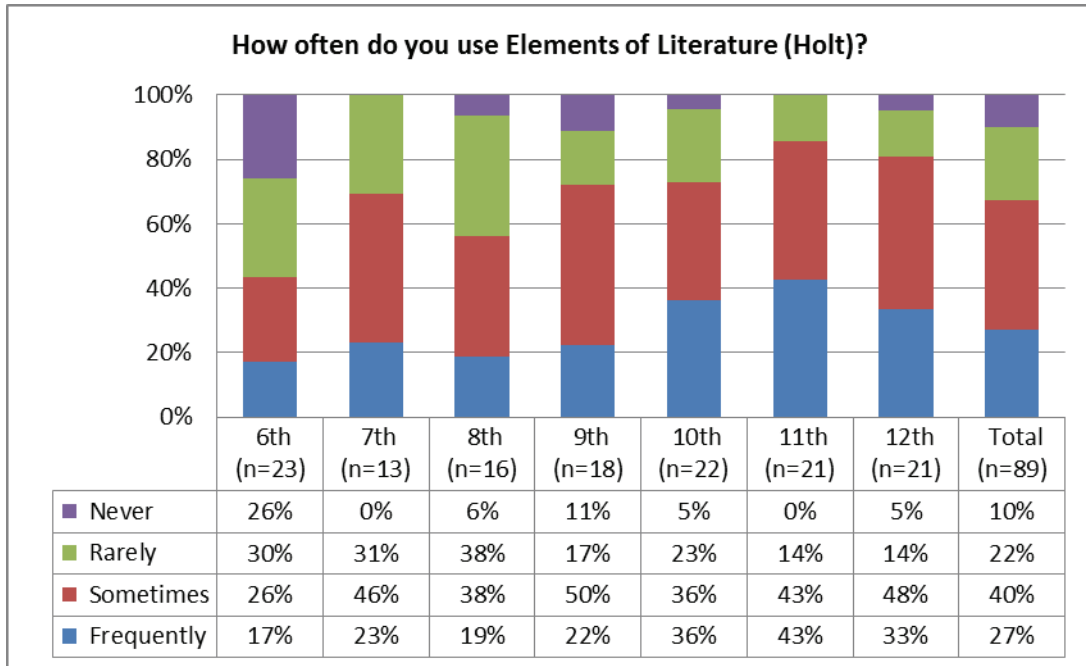
**Figure 8** shows the frequency by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts) that survey respondents teach with trade books to small groups.

**Figure 8: Percent of Teachers Using Trade Books with Small Groups by Course Type**



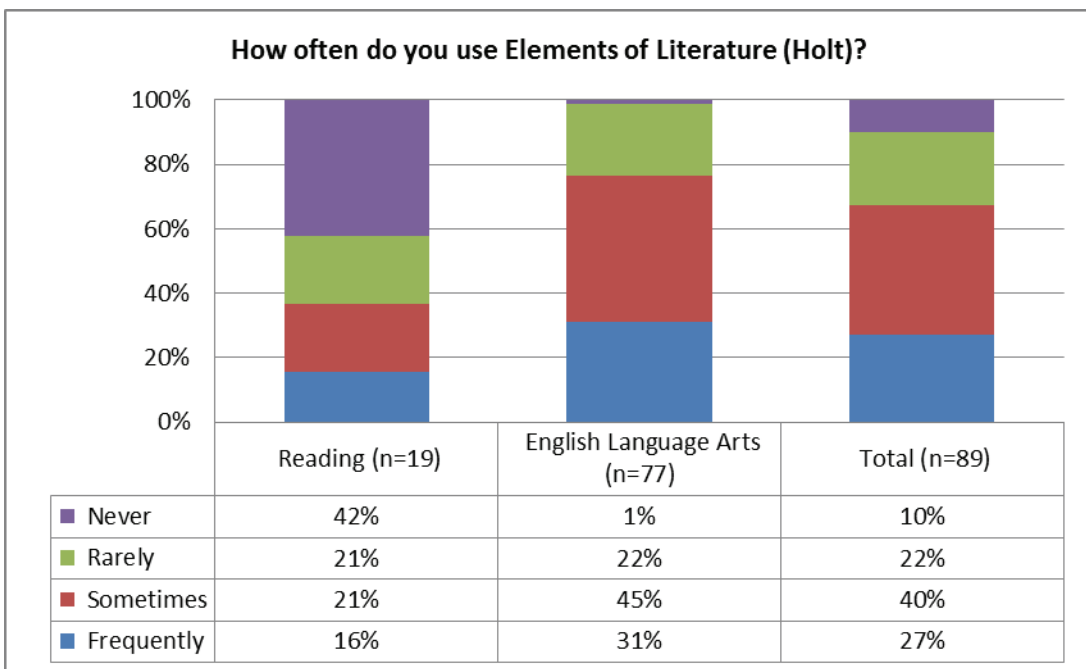
**Figure 9** shows the frequency by grade level that survey respondents utilize the Elements of Literature trade book, published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Figure 9: Percent of Teachers Using Elements of Literature by Grade Level**



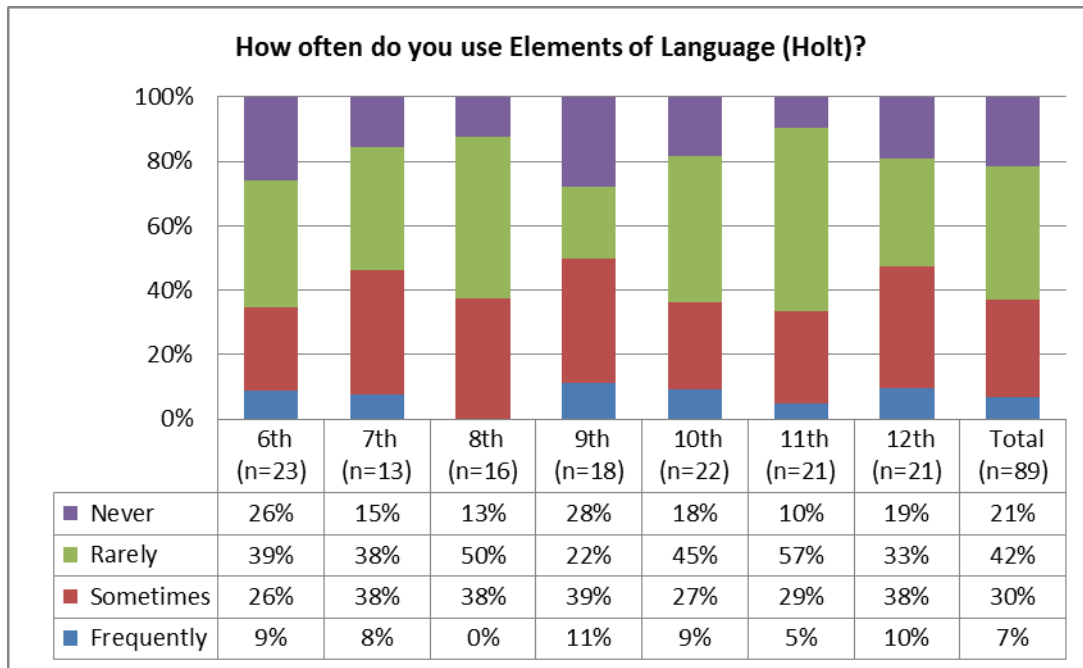
**Figure 10** shows the frequency by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts) that survey respondents utilize the Elements of Literature trade book, published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Figure 10: Percent of Teachers Using Elements of Literature by Course Type**



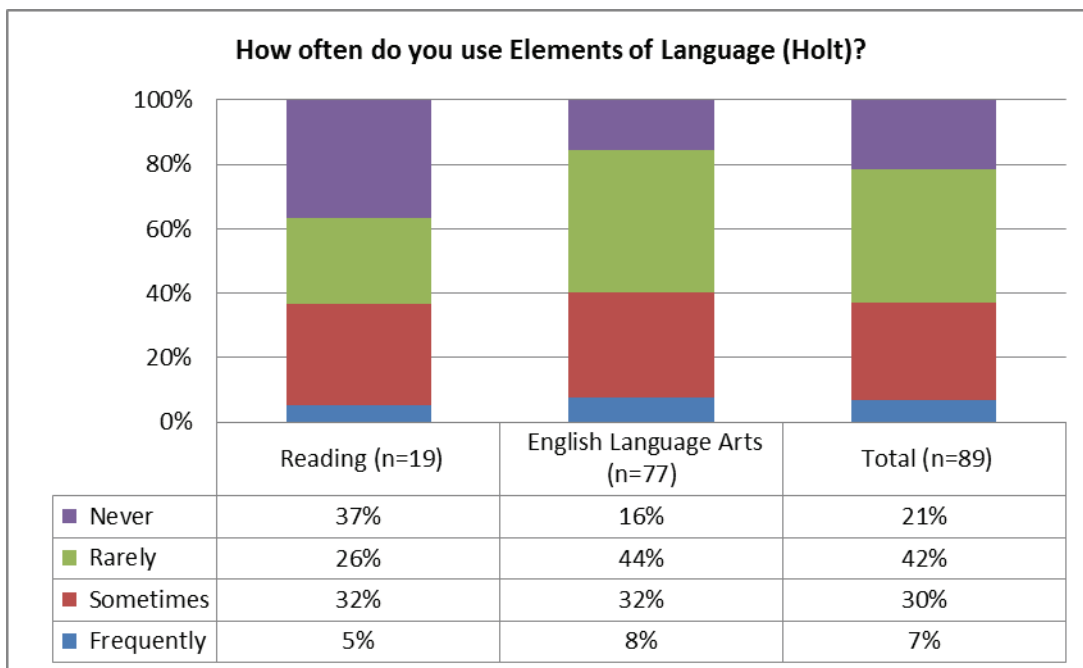
**Figure 11** shows the frequency by grade level that survey respondents utilize the Elements of Language trade book, published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Figure 11: Percent of Teachers Using Elements of Language by Grade Level**



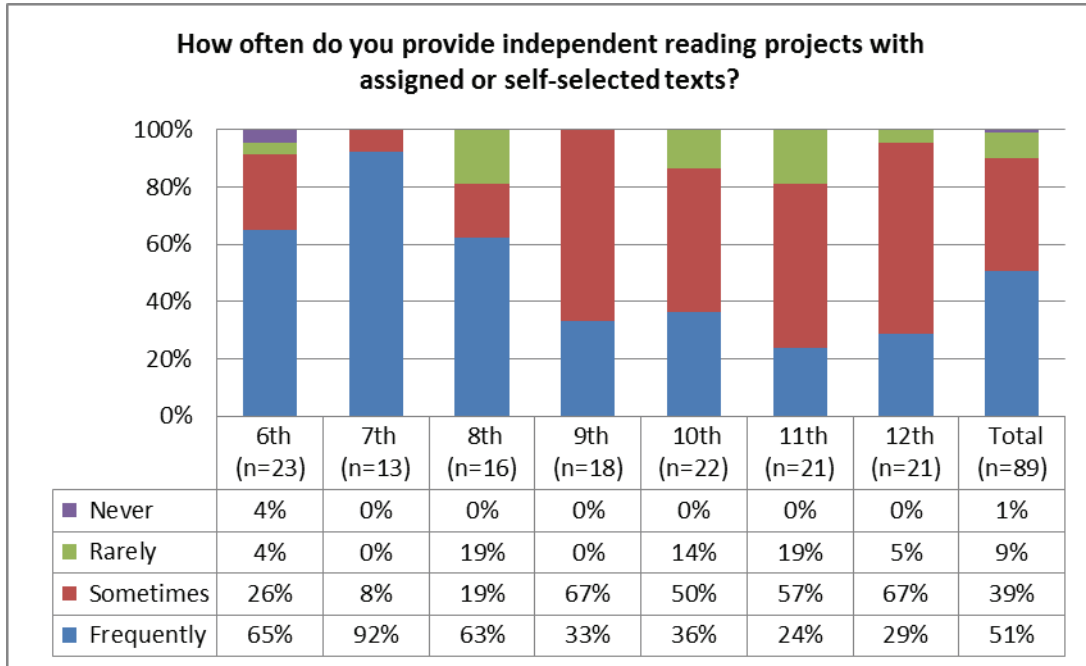
**Figure 12** shows the frequency by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts) that survey respondents utilize the Elements of Language trade book, published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

**Figure 12: Percent of Teachers Using Elements of Language by Course Type**



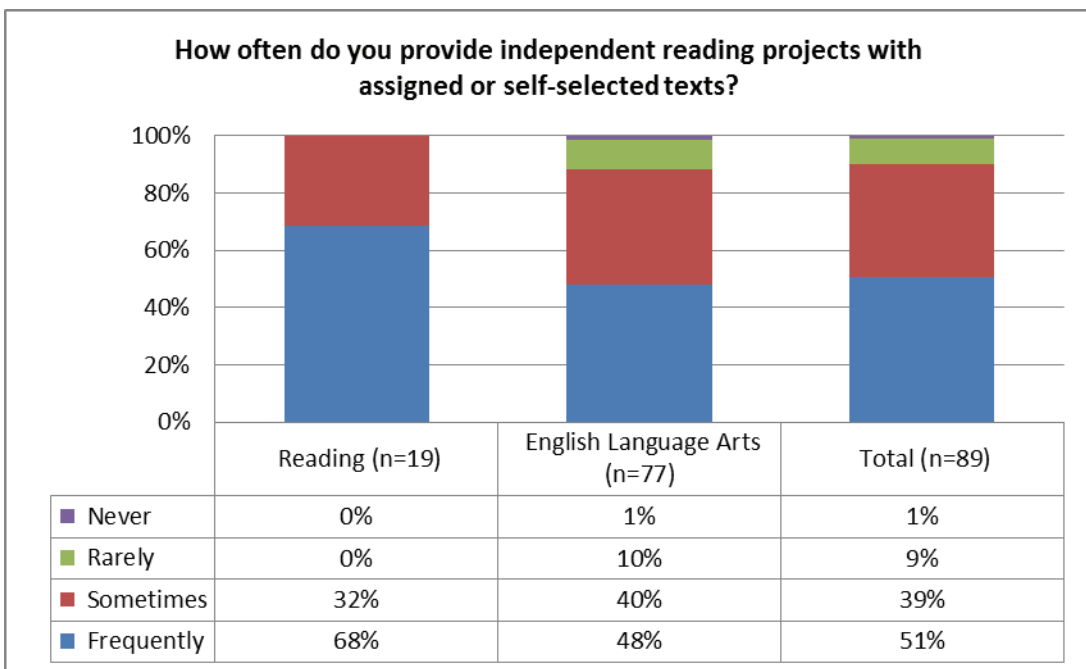
**Figure 13** shows the frequency by grade level that survey respondents provide independent reading projects, utilizing assigned or self-selected texts.

**Figure 13: Percent of Teachers Providing Independent Reading Projects by Grade Level**



**Figure 14** shows the frequency by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts) that survey respondents provide independent reading projects, utilizing assigned or self-selected texts.

**Figure 14: Percent of Teachers Providing Independent Reading Projects by Course Type**





**Table 1** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 6 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 1: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 6 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Maniac Magee—Spinelli	9	39%
Stealing Freedom—Carbone	7	30%
Lyddie—Paterson	5	22%
Bull Run—Fleischman	5	22%
Tuck Everlasting—Babbitt	4	17%
None of the above	4	17%
Hatchet —Paulsen	4	17%
Bud, not Buddy—Curtis	4	17%
The Year of the Hangman—Blackwood	3	13%
The Witch of Blackbird Pond—Speare	3	13%
The Lightning Thief—Riordan	3	13%
The Fighting Ground—Avi	3	13%
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry—Taylor	3	13%
Rifles for Watie—Keith	3	13%
Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad—Petry	3	13%
Full Tilt—Shusterman	3	13%
The Golden Compass—Pullman	2	9%
My Name is Brain Brian—Betancourt	2	9%
My Brother Sam is Dead—Collier	2	9%
Flip—Lubar	2	9%
Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs—Draper	1	4%
Woodson—Paulsen	1	4%
Where the Red Fern Grows—Rawls	1	4%
Whales on Stilts—Anderson	1	4%
The Fellowship of the Ring—Tolkien	1	4%
The Boggart—Cooper	1	4%
Peak—Smith	1	4%
Midnight for Charlie Bone—Nimmo	1	4%
Glory Field—Myers	1	4%
Canyons—Paulsen	1	4%
Blood on the River—Carbone	1	4%
April Morning—Fast	1	4%
True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle—Avi	0	0%
Treasure Island—Stevenson	0	0%
The Maze—Hobbs	0	0%
The Girl Who Owned a City—Nelson	0	0%
Squashed—Bauer	0	0%
Sees Behind Trees—Dorris	0	0%
Regarding the Fountain—Klise	0	0%
Princess Academy—Hale	0	0%
Loch—Zindel	0	0%
Ghost Canoe—Hobbs	0	0%
Dogsong—Paulsen	0	0%
Can't You Make them Behave, King George?—Fritz	0	0%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>86</b>	

**Table 2** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 7 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 2: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 7 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
The Outsiders—Hinton	12	92%
Dave at Night—Levine	7	54%
Tangerine—Bloor	5	38%
Ashes of Roses—Auch	5	38%
Farewell to Manzanar—Houston	5	38%
A Midsummer Night’s Dream—Shakespeare	5	38%
Hoot—Hiaasen	4	31%
The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963—Curtis	4	31%
The Devil’s Arithmetic—Yolen	4	31%
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn—Smith	4	31%
Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World—Armstrong	4	31%
Freak the Mighty—Philbrick	3	23%
Under the Blood Red Sun—Salisbury	3	23%
Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the Weedpatch School—Stanely	3	23%
The Hidden Children—Marks	3	23%
Hitler Youth—Bartoletti	3	23%
The City of Ember—DuPrau	3	23%
Bronx Masquerade—Grimes	2	15%
Scorpions—Myers	2	15%
Deathwatch—White	2	15%
The Harlem Renaissance—Wills Hudson	2	15%
Hidden Talents—Lubar	2	15%
Lion Boy—Corder	2	15%
Chasing Vermeer—Balliett	1	8%
Walk Two Moons—Creech	1	8%
Dragonwings—Yep	1	8%
How Angel Peterson Got His Name—Paulsen	1	8%
No More Dead Dogs—Korman	1	8%
The Folk Keeper—Billingsley	1	8%
Watership Down—Adams	1	8%
Schooled—Korman	0	0%
Fair Weather—Peck	0	0%
Storm Warriors—Carbone	0	0%
Small Steps: The Yedar I Got Polio—Kehret and Shanahan	0	0%
Barrio Boy—Galarza	0	0%
Sorrow’s Kitchen: The Life & Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston—Lyons	0	0%
None of the above	0	0%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>96</b>	

**Table 3** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 8 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 3: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 8 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
The Giver—Lowry	16	100%
Twelfth Night—Shakespeare	14	88%
Animal Farm—Orwell	12	75%
Stargirl—Spinelli	10	63%
The Diary of Anne Frank—Frank	9	56%
Flowers for Algernon—Keyes	8	50%
Monster—Myers	6	38%
Warriors Don't Cry—Beales	5	31%
Ender's Game—Card	5	31%
Stuck In Neutral—Trueman	4	25%
Romiette and Julio—Draper	3	19%
Zach's Lie—Smith	3	19%
Fast Food Nation—Schlosser	3	19%
The Color of My Words—Joseph	2	13%
That Was Then, This Is Now—Hinton	2	13%
Call of the Wild—London	2	13%
Parrot in the Oven—Martinez	2	13%
Waiting for the Rain—Gordon	2	13%
We Beat the Streets—Davis, Jenkins, and Hunt	2	13%
Lupita Manana—Beatty	1	6%
Nothing But the Truth—Avi	1	6%
Pay It Forward—Hyde	1	6%
Journey to Jo'burg—Naidoo	1	6%
So Far from the Bamboo Grove—Watkins	1	6%
Year of Impossible Goodbyes—Choi	1	6%
Forbidden City—Bell	1	6%
The Miracle Worker—Gibson	1	6%
The Story of My Life—Keller	1	6%
Motel of the Mysteries—Macaulay	1	6%
Twilight—Meyer	1	6%
Martian Chronicles—Bradbury	1	6%
Dangerous Skies—Fisher Staples	0	0%
The Sky Changed Forever—Alshalabi & Drexler	0	0%
Whirligig—Fleischman	0	0%
The Island on Bird Street—Orlev	0	0%
Eyes of the Emperor—Salisbury	0	0%
A Girl Named Disaster—Farmer	0	0%
Life on the Mississippi—Twain	0	0%
Framed—Boyce	0	0%
Thwonk—Bauer	0	0%
Caddy Ever After—McKay	0	0%
As You Like It—Shakespeare	0	0%
Cheaper by the Dozen—Gilbreth & Carey	0	0%
House of Stairs—Sleator	0	0%
Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment—Patterson	0	0%
Z for Zachariah—O'Brien	0	0%
None of the above	0	0%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>122</b>	

**Table 4** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 9 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 4: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 9 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Romeo & Juliet	12	67%
Odyssey, The	11	61%
Night	9	50%
None of the above	5	28%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>37</b>	

**Table 5** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 10 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 5: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 10 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Julius Caesar	10	45%
1984	9	41%
The Bean Trees	8	36%
Cyrano de Bergerac	6	27%
None of the above	6	27%
The Iliad	3	14%
Cry, The Beloved Country	1	5%
A Separate Peace	1	5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>44</b>	

**Table 6** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 11 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 6: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 11 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
The Crucible	13	62%
The Great Gatsby	12	57%
Their Eyes Were Watching God	12	57%
The Scarlet Letter	9	43%
Walden	8	38%
A Raisin in the Sun	6	29%
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass	5	24%
The Awakening	3	14%
The Death of a Salesman	3	14%
The Grapes of Wrath	3	14%
A The Streetcar Named Desire	3	14%
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	2	10%
A The Lesson before Dying	2	10%
None of the above	2	10%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>83</b>	

**Table 7** lists all the trade books currently reserved for grade 12 ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 7: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Reserved Grade 12 Trade Books**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
The Canterbury Tales	13	62%
Beowulf	12	57%
Macbeth	11	52%
The Kite Runner	10	48%
Hamlet	9	43%
Heart of Darkness	4	19%
Oedipus	4	19%
Wuthering Heights	4	19%
The Metamorphosis	3	14%
Sold	3	14%
The Bluest Eye	2	10%
Gilgamesh	1	5%
None of the above	1	5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>77</b>	

**Table 8** lists additional novels currently reserved for high school ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used by grade level. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 8: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Additional High School Trade Books by Grade Level**

Responses	9th Grade		10th Grade		11th Grade		12th Grade		All Grades	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Antigone	0	0%	3	14%	2	10%	3	14%	6	14%
Black Boy	3	17%	3	14%	3	14%	2	10%	5	11%
Bless Me, Ultima	2	11%	3	14%	5	24%	4	19%	7	16%
Candide	1	6%	4	18%	6	29%	5	24%	8	18%
The Catcher in the Rye	5	28%	14	64%	9	43%	9	43%	19	43%
The Color of Water	3	17%	2	9%	4	19%	4	19%	9	20%
Crime and unishment	0	0%	0	0%	2	10%	1	5%	3	7%
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	9	50%	4	18%	2	10%	7	33%	13	30%
Dracula	1	6%	5	23%	2	10%	5	24%	8	18%
Frankenstein	2	11%	7	32%	4	19%	9	43%	13	30%
Great Expectations	1	6%	2	9%	4	19%	4	19%	5	11%
Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet	1	6%	0	0%	1	5%	2	10%	2	5%
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	0	0%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	3	7%
Jane Eyre	1	6%	2	9%	1	5%	3	14%	5	11%
The Joy Luck Club	0	0%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	3	7%
Lord of the Flies	12	67%	8	36%	7	33%	11	52%	21	48%
Maus I	1	6%	4	18%	2	10%	2	10%	7	16%
Maus II	1	6%	4	18%	2	10%	2	10%	7	16%
Of Mice and Men	5	28%	10	45%	8	38%	9	43%	16	36%
The Old Man and the Sea	2	11%	3	14%	5	24%	4	19%	7	16%
Othello	2	11%	5	23%	4	19%	8	38%	11	25%
The Picture of Dorian Gray	2	11%	3	14%	2	10%	6	29%	8	18%
Siddhartha	2	11%	7	32%	5	24%	6	29%	10	23%
Song of Solomon	2	11%	4	18%	3	14%	5	24%	8	18%
Speak	3	17%	5	23%	2	10%	4	19%	7	16%
Things Fall Apart	2	11%	6	27%	6	29%	9	43%	12	27%
To Kill a Mockingbird	8	44%	10	45%	10	48%	11	52%	21	48%
None of the above	2	11%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>73</b>		<b>120</b>		<b>103</b>		<b>137</b>		<b>246</b>	

**Table 9** lists additional novels currently reserved for high school ELA teachers and shows the extent to which each is being used by Course Type. Multiple answers per participant were possible. Therefore, the sum of the percentages may exceed 100 since a participant could select more than one answer for this question.

**Table 9: Percent of Teachers Utilizing Additional High School Trade Books by Course Type**

Responses	Reading		English Language Arts		All Course Types	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Antigone	1	20%	6	14%	6	14%
Black Boy	1	20%	4	10%	5	11%
Bless Me, Ultima	1	20%	6	14%	7	16%
Candide	1	20%	8	19%	8	18%
The Catcher in the Rye	1	20%	18	43%	19	43%
The Color of Water	1	20%	9	21%	9	20%
Crime and Punishment	1	20%	3	7%	3	7%
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	2	40%	12	29%	13	30%
Dracula	2	40%	7	17%	8	18%
Frankenstein	2	40%	12	29%	13	30%
Great Expectations	1	20%	4	10%	5	11%
Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet	1	20%	1	2%	2	5%
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	0	0%	3	7%	3	7%
Jane Eyre	2	40%	4	10%	5	11%
The Joy Luck Club	1	20%	3	7%	3	7%
Lord of the Flies	2	40%	20	48%	21	48%
Maus I	1	20%	7	17%	7	16%
Maus II	1	20%	7	17%	7	16%
Of Mice and Men	3	60%	15	36%	16	36%
The Old Man and the Sea	1	20%	6	14%	7	16%
Othello	1	20%	10	24%	11	25%
The Picture of Dorian Gray	2	40%	7	17%	8	18%
Siddhartha	2	40%	9	21%	10	23%
Song of Solomon	0	0%	8	19%	8	18%
Speak	3	60%	6	14%	7	16%
Things Fall Apart	1	20%	12	29%	12	27%
To Kill a Mockingbird	3	60%	20	48%	21	48%
None of the above	0	0%	2	5%	2	5%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>38</b>		<b>229</b>		<b>246</b>	

---

Respondents were also asked to provide titles to the trade books they use with their classes that are not listed on the APS reserve list. In addition to the books referenced below, teachers at all grade levels stated that books are often left to student choice.

*[I also use] biographies and other novels from the library during research projects — Grade 6 teacher*

Nineteen 6th grade teachers responded to the request to “Please list any other novels you teach.” Together they named 49 novels. The book A Wrinkle In Time by Madeleine L'Engel was listed by four teachers; Love That Dog by Sharon Creech was listed by three teachers. An additional 15 books were listed twice.

Twelve 7th grade teachers listed 26 novels they teach with. Three novels were listed twice by teachers. They were The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain, Jaguar by Roland Swift, and Seedfolks by Paul Flesichman.

*I would use many more books from the reserved list if I could get the number of copies I need for the students. — Grade 7 teacher*

Fourteen 8th grade teachers listed 55 additional novels as part of their curriculum. Six entries were listed twice, and two of them were plays by Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Taming of the Shrew.

Fifteen 9th grade teachers listed 47 additional novels. One book, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie was listed by four teachers. Two additional books, All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon were each listed twice.

Twenty-one 10th grade teachers listed 50 additional novels as part of their ELA curriculum. The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien was listed by four teachers, and Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer was listed three. An additional 7 books were each listed twice.

*There are a lot of high interest reads for the freshman, but since I have switched to teaching juniors, I have had a lot of trouble finding novels they are interested in. — High School teacher*

Nineteen 11th grade teachers listed 56 books. Two of these entries were listed by four teachers each: In Cold Blood by Truman Capote and The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien .

Eighteen 12th grade teachers listed 68 books as part of their curriculum. Ten of those books were listed by two teachers. One book, As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner, was listed three times.

Some of the multiple listings of books across grade levels can be attributed to the way data was collected. Teachers who taught more than one grade had their titles applied to both grade levels. It is worth noting, however, when the same titles were listed as part of both the middle and high school curriculum. Four books fell into this category: Into Thin Air (grades 8, 10, 11, and 12) and Into the Wild (grades 8, 10, and 11) both by John Krakauer, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon, and Seedfolks (grades 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12) by Paul Flesichman.

*I've used Seedfolks in conjunction with a community garden project. — High School teacher*



Respondents were asked to share how they promote independent reading among their students. Their responses were separated into 12 categories, as shown in **Table 10** and **Table 11**. The number and percentage of responses for each category is shown by grade level.

Multiple answers per participant were possible.

**Table 10: How Middle School Teachers Promote Independent Reading Among Students**

Response	6th		7th		8th	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Assignments/projects based on independent reading	14	27%	5	18%	6	14%
Book recommendations (general or based on student feedback)	0	0%	1	4%	2	5%
Book talks	6	12%	3	11%	5	12%
Classroom library/books displayed in classroom	3	6%	2	7%	2	5%
Class discussion about books/reading material/authors	5	10%	1	4%	3	7%
Offer choice (free choice, or from a list)	4	8%	3	11%	3	7%
Group work with student-selected book/reading material	0	0%	1	4%	3	7%
In-class silent reading time	3	6%	3	11%	4	9%
Independent reading requirement (reading log, reading contract, etc)	8	16%	5	18%	3	7%
Library visits	4	8%	2	7%	1	2%
Online/technology element (Blackboard, blogging, online book trailers, audiobooks)	2	4%	1	4%	4	9%
Other*	2	4%	1	4%	7	16%
<b>Total</b>	51	100%	28	100%	43	100%

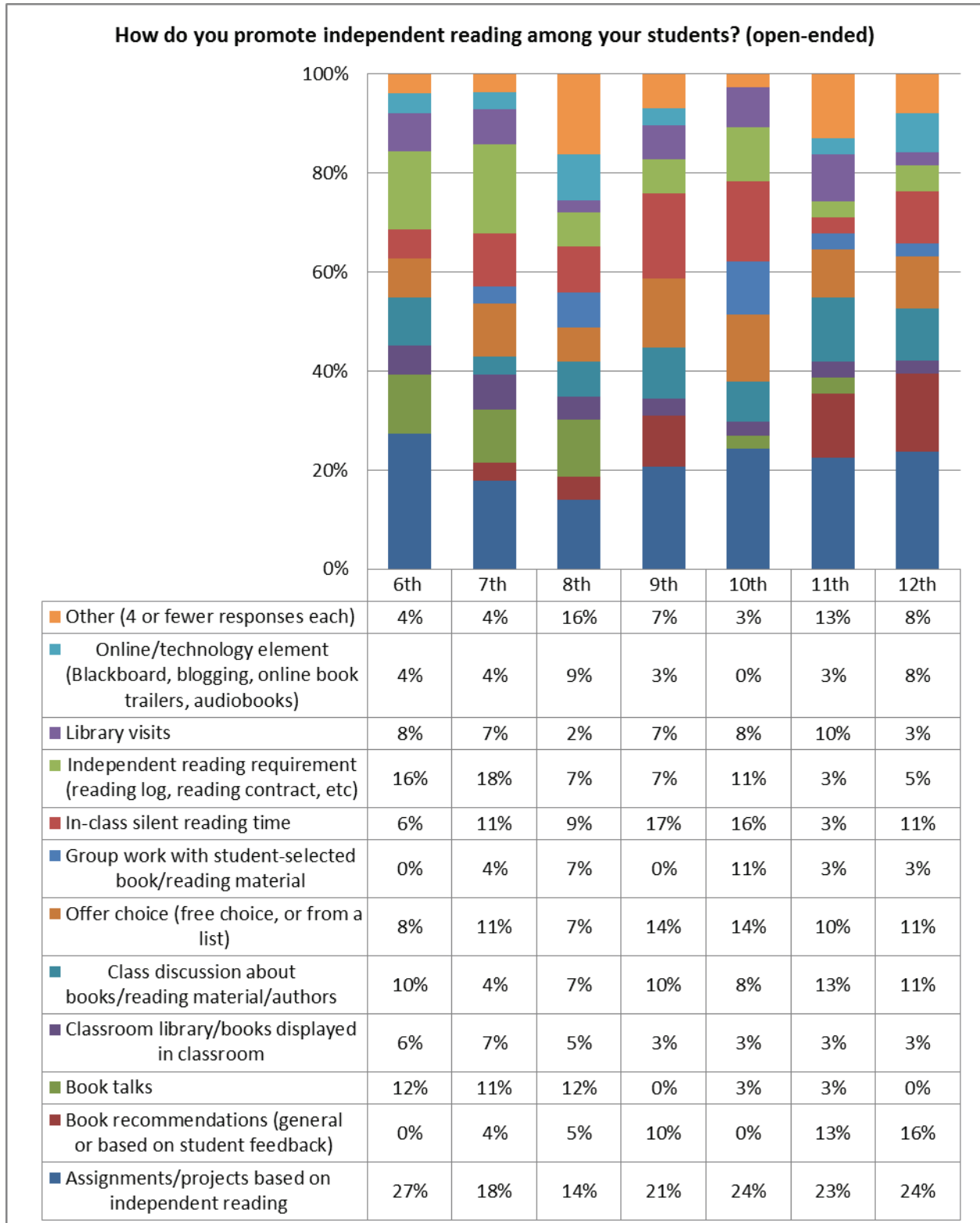
\*"Other" responses included extra credit, literary field trips, summer reading assignments, teacher read-alouds, a requirement for students to bring books to class, book fairs, cross-curricular projects, assigning less homework in order to provide time for independent reading, and rewards for reading a certain number of books.

**Table 11: How High School Teachers Promote Independent Reading Among Students**

Response	9th		10th		11th		12th	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Assignments/projects based on independent reading	6	21%	9	24%	7	23%	9	24%
Book recommendations (general or based on student feedback)	3	10%	0	0%	4	13%	6	16%
Book talks	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%	0	0%
Classroom library/books displayed in classroom	1	3%	1	3%	1	3%	1	3%
Class discussion about books/reading material/authors	3	10%	3	8%	4	13%	4	11%
Offer choice (free choice, or from a list)	4	14%	5	14%	3	10%	4	11%
Group work with student-selected book/reading material	0	0%	4	11%	1	3%	1	3%
In-class silent reading time	5	17%	6	16%	1	3%	4	11%
Independent reading requirement (reading log, reading contract, etc)	2	7%	4	11%	1	3%	2	5%
Library visits	2	7%	3	8%	3	10%	1	3%
Online/technology element (Blackboard, blogging, online book trailers, audiobooks)	1	3%	0	0%	1	3%	3	8%
Other (4 or fewer responses each)	2	7%	1	3%	4	13%	3	8%
Total	29	100%	37	100%	31	100%	38	100%

**Figure 15** shows how APS teachers promote independent reading among their students, by grade level. The “Other” category aggregates all those open-ended responses that were mentioned by four teachers or less.

**Figure 15: How Teachers Promote Independent Reading Among Students**



# Articulation and Alignment of the APS ELA Program with State Standards and County Policy - Middle Schools

Prepared for Arlington Public Schools

May 2013



In the following report, Hanover Research assesses the extent to which the middle school English language arts (ELA) curriculum in Arlington Public Schools (APS) aligns with the Standards of Learning specified by the Virginia Department of Education. To that end, we examine the syllabi of all APS ELA courses and indicate the core instructional strands mentioned by each teacher. In addition, we evaluate the extent to which the syllabi comply with APS grade reporting procedures. When reviewing the syllabi for alignment and compliance purposes, we discuss district-wide trends and note any differences across schools, grade levels, and student groups.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary and Key Findings .....</b>	<b>21</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	21
METHODOLOGY .....	23
Note on HILT/HILTEX Courses.....	25
Report Structure .....	25
KEY FINDINGS.....	25
<b>Section I: Alignment of Syllabi with Virginia Standards of learning – Analysis .....</b>	<b>27</b>
SUMMARY ANALYSIS.....	27
GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS .....	28
Grade 6 .....	29
Grade 7 .....	30
Grade 8 .....	31
HILT/HILTEX .....	33
CONCLUSIONS .....	34
<b>Section II: Compliance of Syllabi with Grade Reporting Procedures- Analysis.....</b>	<b>35</b>
SUMMARY ANALYSIS.....	35
GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS .....	36
CONCLUSIONS .....	41

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

### INTRODUCTION

In the following document, Hanover Research assesses the extent to which the middle school English language arts (ELA) curriculum in Arlington Public Schools (APS) aligns with the Standards of Learning specified by the Virginia Department of Education. To that end, we examine the syllabi of all APS ELA courses and indicate the core instructional strands mentioned by each teacher. In addition, we evaluate the extent to which the syllabi comply with APS grade reporting procedures. When reviewing the syllabi for alignment and compliance purposes, we discuss district-wide trends and note any differences across schools, grade levels, and student groups.

The Virginia Department of Education, through the Standards of Learning (SOLs), specifies the content knowledge, skills, and understanding that the state's schools must provide to students in English language arts (ELA). This report analyzes 113 syllabi from ELA courses across the District's six middle schools. In this report, we will explore whether or not the content of a syllabus varies substantively depending on the nature of the students taught, with students segmented into three groups: students in the regular curriculum; special education students; and English language learners (High Intensity Language Training (HILT) or High Intensity Language Training Extension (HILTEX)). Irrespective of the nature of the students taught, all ELA courses must deliver the required content to enable students to demonstrate proficiency or advanced levels of achievement on the appropriate end-of-year or end-of-course SOL assessment.

The SOLs for middle school (grades 6-8) students indicate a set of learning objectives within each of the four core instructional strands: communication (speaking, listening, and media literacy); reading; writing; and research. In the following table, we provide an overview of the learning objectives for each middle school grade level.

**Figure I: Overview of Virginia SOLs for Middle School**

GRADE 6 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 7 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 8 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>
Small-Group Activities	Group Discussions	Use Interviewing Techniques
Oral Presentations	Oral Presentations	Oral Presentations (Groups)
Media Literacy	Relate Verbal, Nonverbal Messages	Oral Presentations (Individuals)
	Media Literacy	Creative Media Messages

<b>GRADE 6 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>GRADE 7 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>GRADE 8 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>
		Informational Media Messages
<b>READING</b>	<b>READING</b>	<b>READING</b>
Unfamiliar Words and Phrases	Unfamiliar Words and Phrases	Vocabulary Development
Fictional Texts	Fictional Texts	Fictional Texts
Narrative Nonfiction	Narrative Nonfiction	Narrative Nonfiction
Poetry	Poetry	Poetry
Other Non-Fiction	Other Non-Fiction	Other Non-Fiction
<b>WRITING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>
Narration	Exposition	Narration
Description	Narration	Exposition
Exposition	Persuasion	Persuasion
Persuasion	Edit Writing	Informational
Edit Writing		Edit Writing
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>
Find, Evaluate and Select Resources	Use Reference Materials to Produce a Research Product	Use Reference Materials to Produce a Research Product
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>
<b>TOTAL = 15</b>	<b>TOTAL = 15</b>	<b>TOTAL = 17</b>

In addition to alignment with state-wide SOLs, we evaluate the extent to which course syllabi comply with APS' grade reporting procedures. The District codified the procedures in two documents: Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) 20-5.150 Communication – Grade Reporting to Parents (Grades 6-12);<sup>1</sup> and Checklist for Secondary ELA/Reading Syllabus.<sup>2</sup> The procedures delineated in the two documents guide APS teachers when communicating goals, progress, and expected outcomes to students and parents. The grade reporting procedures for all grades are listed in the following table.

<sup>1</sup> "Policy Implementation Procedures: 20-5.150 Communication – Grade Reporting to Parents (Grades 6-12)." Arlington Public Schools, November 4, 2011, pp. 3-4.  
<http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Shared/school%20board%20policies/20-instr/20-5.150-communication-grade-rept-parents-%20grades%206-12-PIP.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "Checklist for Secondary ELA/Reading Syllabus." Arlington Public Schools. ELA Secondary Syllabus Checklist.doc

**Figure II: APS Grade Reporting Procedures, All Grades**

All APS Syllabi Should Include the Following Grade Reporting Procedures			
Course Title	School Name	School Year	Teacher Name
Teacher E-mail Address	Course Description or Overview	Course Objectives and Grade-Level Theme	Text(s) and Supplemental Materials
Units of Study with Anticipated Dates of Completion	Supplies	Attendance Policy	Academic Integrity (i.e., Plagiarism)
APS Grading Scale	“Student grades reflect achievement and not student behavior.”	Quarterly grades calculated through accumulation of summative and formative assessments	Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade	Final exams count for a maximum of 20% with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades	Final exam exemptions are permitted as specified	Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters
Explanation of grading policies for late work	Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades		
<b>Total = 22</b>			

## METHODOLOGY

In this report, we review the syllabi of **APS middle school ELA courses** to determine the degree of alignment with state and district standards. Approximately 113 syllabi were received from APS’ six middle school programs, which included the following:

- Gunston Middle School
- H.B. Woodlawn Secondary Program (comprehensive school for students who need less restriction and more freedom to be successful in school)
- Jefferson Middle School
- Kenmore Middle School
- Swanson Middle School
- Williamsburg Middle School

Further, we note HILT/HILTEX courses at the middle-school level are established to align across the grade-level SOLs in grades 6, 7, and 8, though changes at the high-school require such courses to align with a single grade level. For this reason, in this report we separate



findings for HILT/HILTEX to acknowledge that they are not aligned with a single, specific grade-level in middle school.

Additionally, unlike in the high school course population, none of the middle school courses were designated for exclusion; this implies that all middle school courses (including all SPED and HILT courses) must in align with the SOLs.

In order to determine the alignment of the syllabi with the Virginia SOLs, Hanover created assessment tables that examine the alignment of syllabi from each school to the strand and learning objectives outlined in Figure I, above. A strand or learning objective was considered to be addressed by a syllabus if the syllabus *made explicit mention* of that area. Due to the fact that the number of required standards differed by grade level (from 15 for grade 6 and 7 syllabi to 17 for grade 8 syllabi), Hanover opted to examine the *percentage of standards addressed* on each syllabus rather than the *total number of standards addressed*. As an example, the calculation used to determine the percentage of grade 6 standards addressed was as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of SOL standards addressed accross all grade 6 syllabi}}{(15 \times \text{Total number of syllabi received})}$$

Similar calculations were used to calculate the percentage of standards addressed by course type and school. This methodology allowed us to more easily compare our findings across different subgroups within the district (i.e. grade level, course type, and district middle school programs).

We used a similar methodology to examine the alignment of ELA syllabi with APS grade reporting procedures. However, because all APS middle school syllabi – irrespective of grade level – are required to address the same 22 procedures, we were able to compare our finding by *number of standards addressed* rather than by *percentage of standards addressed* across all syllabi.

Materials provided by APS indicated that there are currently 194 syllabi currently in use across all district high school ELA programs. A total of 160 syllabi were submitted to Hanover for this review, for a **response rate of 82.5 percent**.

The received syllabi were reviewed according to rubrics approved in collaboration with the district. We note that although 160 total syllabi were received, only approximately 113 syllabi were reviewed in our analysis. This discrepancy is due to the fact that many APS courses that are offered over two semesters have identical syllabi for each semester. An attempt has been made to count unique courses and unique syllabi. For example, courses indicated as two-course classes have been counted as having only one syllabus.

Finally, we note that many abbreviations are used in these tables in order to conserve space, including “AP,” to indicate an Advanced Placement course, “Rdg” to indicate a reading course, and “Int” to indicate intensified courses.

### *NOTE ON HILT/HILTEX COURSES*

Courses for English language learners often used syllabi that addressed alternate standards in addition to or in lieu of addressing the Virginia SOLs. HILT and HILTEX syllabi, for instance, often addressed World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) [English Language Development Standards](#), which are designed to inform and guide instructional practices in ELL classrooms. We note that APS expects that the courses described above will have syllabi that address *both* the Virginia SOLs and WIDA standards. In other words, high levels of alignment with the English Language Development Standards should not preclude syllabi from also addressing the Virginia SOLs.

### *REPORT STRUCTURE*

The report is organized according to the following two sections:

- **Section I: Alignment of Syllabi with Virginia Standards of Learning – Analysis** presents an analysis of the syllabi of APS middle school ELA courses to determine the degree of alignment with state standards.
- **Section II: Compliance of Syllabi with Grade Reporting Procedures – Analysis** evaluates the extent to which course syllabi comply with APS’ grade reporting procedures.

The key findings from our review of APS secondary ELA syllabi are presented below.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Overall, there was a very wide range in alignment with Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts when examining syllabi by school, ranging from 50.8 percent of standards addressed in an average reviewed syllabus (School A) to 93.2 percent (School F). However, when examining curriculum alignment by grade level and course type, the range lessened. The alignment to Virginia Standards of Learning by grade level ranges from 72.0 percent for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 83.6 percent for HILT/HILTEX courses. HILT/HILTEX syllabi are also more closely aligned to Virginia Standards of Learning (83.6 percent) than regular education (73.7 percent) or special education (74.5 percent) course syllabi. **No syllabus examined aligned to all Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts.**
- In general, **syllabi were more strongly aligned to the reading and writing strands than the communication and research strands.** However, the amount of variation between the reading and writing strands and the communication and research strands differed between grades. It is also important to note that by design, classes titled “Reading” addressed the communication and reading strands, but rarely addressed the writing or research strands. Additionally, it was somewhat common for a syllabus to mention the importance of communication, reading, writing, or

- research without providing specific examples of the practices that would lead to these learning objectives.
- At least 80 percent of syllabi at each grade level mention the Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts, suggesting a general awareness among teachers of these requirements.
  - The average number of grade reporting requirements included in APS middle school syllabi varied significantly by school; the highest average number of requirements included was 15.6, and the lowest average number of requirements included was 10.1. Variations between the number of requirements included were smaller when syllabi were reviewed across grade levels and course types, ranging from 13.7 (grade 6) to 14.4 (grade 7) and from 13.0 (regular courses) to 14.0 (HILT/HILTEX courses) respectively.
  - The alignment of ELA syllabi with specific grade reporting requirements ranged from an overall percentage of 0 percent to 99.1 percent. Information included most often in the syllabi included course title (99.1 percent), course description or overview (96.5 percent), text(s) and supplemental materials (92.0 percent), teacher name (86.7 percent), teacher email address (83.2 percent), and APS grading scale (83.2 percent). The information provided the least often was related to exams and the distribution of grades among the four quarters: “final exam exemptions...” (0.00%), “final exams count for a maximum...” (1.80%), and “quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated...” (5.30%).
  - In general, middle school syllabi included a higher percentage of Virginia state standards than high school syllabi. However, high school syllabi included a higher average number of APS grade reporting requirements than middle school syllabi.

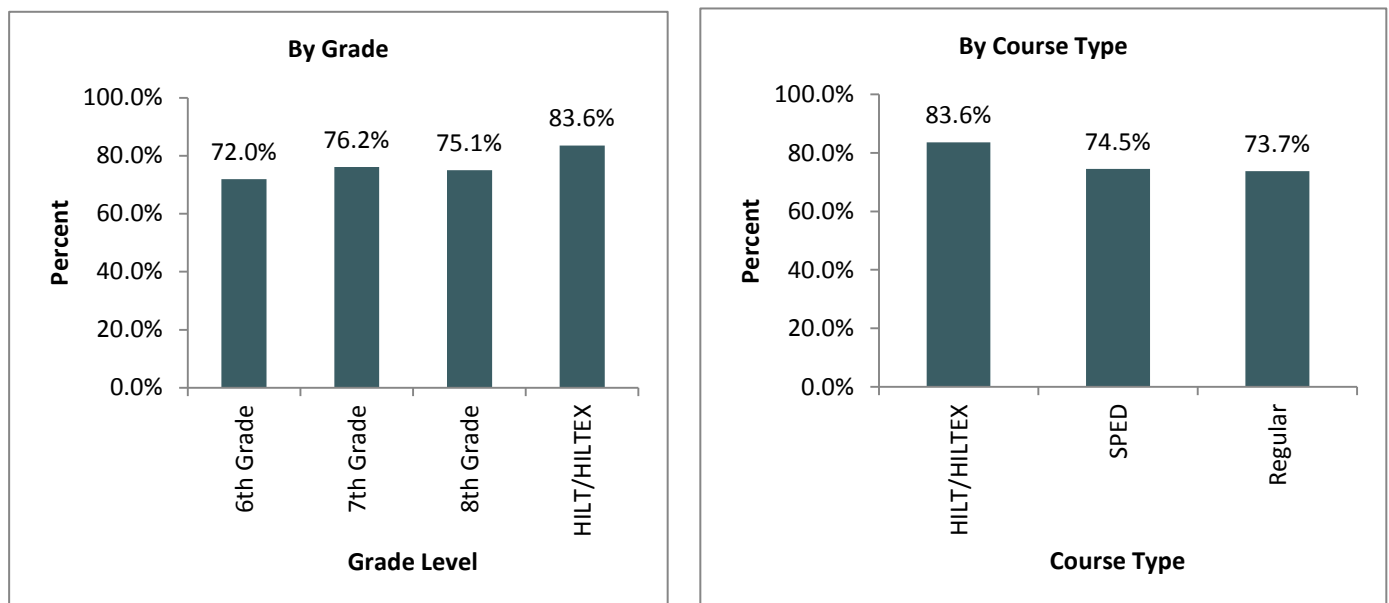
## SECTION I: ALIGNMENT OF SYLLABI WITH VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING – ANALYSIS

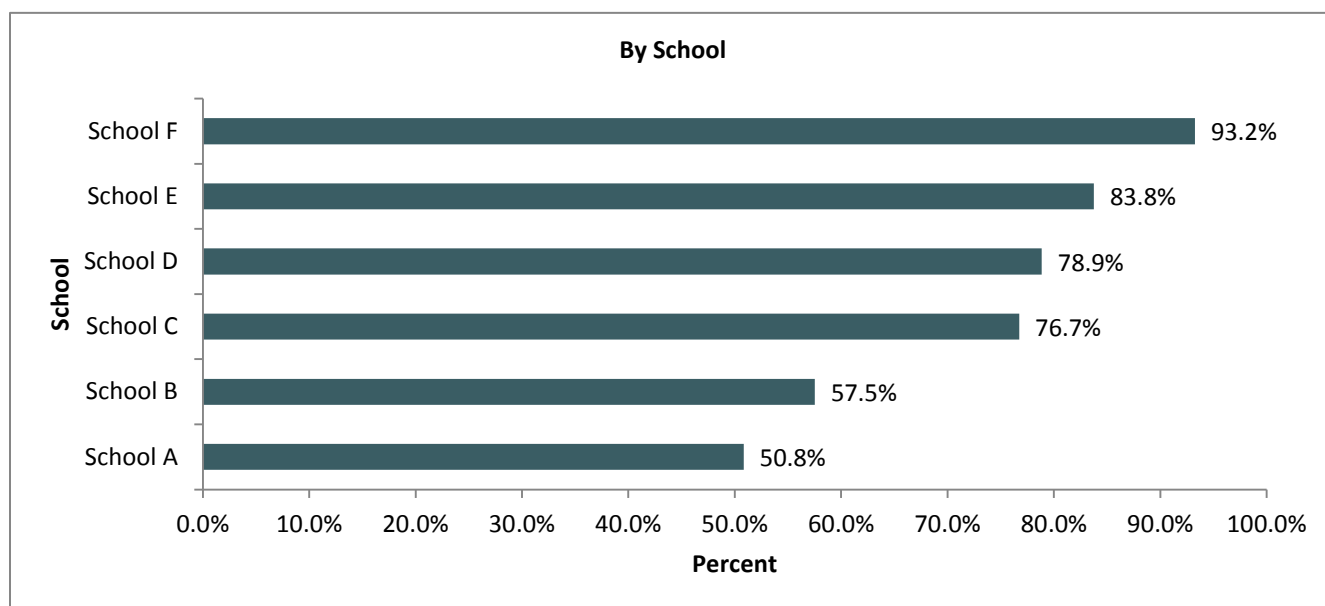
The first section of this report examines the ELA syllabi to determine how often there is stated alignment with the Virginia Standards of Learning. According to the standards outlined by the Virginia Department of Education, students should receive English language arts instruction across four strands: communication, reading, writing, and research. Specific learning objectives under these four strands vary by grade level.

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

As the total number of learning objectives for ELA differs by grade level, the following figures present the number of included standards as a percent of the total possible standards for each level. Overall, there was a very wide range in alignment to Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts when examining syllabi by school, ranging from 50.8 percent average standards addressed to 93.2 percent. However, when examining curriculum alignment by grade level and course type, the range lessened considerably. The alignment to Virginia Standards of Learning by grade level ranges from 72.0 percent for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 83.6 percent for HILT/HILTEX courses. HILT/HILTEX syllabi are also more closely aligned to Virginia Standards of Learning (83.6 percent) than regular education (73.7 percent) or special education (74.5 percent) course syllabi.

**Figure 1.1: Percentage of Addressed Virginia Standards of Learning on APS Syllabi by Grade Level, Course Type, and School**





### GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS

Below, we provide a detailed analysis of syllabi by grade level. For each grade level, we offer information on the number and percent of learning objectives included for that grade, as well as the total number of learning objectives included by course type and school. A few notable trends are discussed below.

In many cases, general statements on the focus of each of the four strands of communication, reading, writing, and research were mentioned in the syllabi. In addition, the listing of the specific Virginia Standards of Learning addressed in the course were provided. However, the amount of detail provided on the ways in which the specific Standards of Learning would be addressed varied.

In general, **syllabi were more strongly aligned to the reading and writing strands than the communication and research strands**. However, the amount of variation between the reading and writing strands and the communication and research strands differed between grades. It is also important to note that by design, classes titled “Reading” addressed the communication and reading strands, but rarely addressed the writing or research strands. Additionally, it was somewhat common for a syllabus to mention the importance of communication, reading, writing, or research without providing specific examples of the practices that would lead to these learning objectives.

At least 80 percent of syllabi at each grade level mention the Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts, suggesting a general awareness among teachers of these requirements. Grade 6 and 7 special education courses typically included a higher number of standards than grade 6 and 7 regular education courses; the opposite was true for grade 8 special and regular education courses. Overall, HILT/HILTEX courses included the highest percentage of references to the state standards of any course type.

It is important to note that the sixth grade figures for School B, and therefore sixth grade district-wide, were heavily influenced by a syllabus that is shared by 12 teachers. As such, elements that this syllabus is lacking, such as communication and each of the communication components and several of the writing components, often have lower percentages in grade 6 than the percentages for grade 7 and 8 district-wide.

Summary tables for each grade level are contained in the following pages.

## GRADE 6

**Figure 1.2: Percentage of Grade 6 Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 46)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF SYLLABI ADDRESSING STANDARD
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	67.4%
Small-Group Activities	67.4%
Oral Presentations	63.0%
Media Literacy	54.3%
<b>READING</b>	100.0%
Unfamiliar Words and Phrases	93.5%
Fictional Texts	89.1%
Narrative Nonfiction	89.1%
Poetry	91.3%
Other Nonfiction	30.4%
<b>WRITING</b>	87.0%
Narration	56.5%
Description	80.4%
Exposition	56.5%
Persuasion	52.2%
Edit Writing	45.7%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	80.4%
Find, Evaluate and Select Resources	76.1%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	87.0%

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.3: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 6 Syllabi – by Course Type**

COURSE TYPE	PERCENT
<b>Regular Education</b>	71.3%
<b>Special Education</b>	74.2%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.4: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 6 Syllabi – By School**

SCHOOL	PERCENT
School A	68.4%
School B	52.3%
School C	82.1%
School D	81.2%
School E	84.7%
School F	93.7%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**GRADE 7****Figure 1.5: Percentage of Grade 7 Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 27)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF SYLLABI ADDRESSING STANDARD
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	88.9%
Group Discussions	63.0%
Oral Presentations	55.6%
Relate Verbal, Nonverbal Messages	59.3%
Media Literacy	59.3%
<b>READING</b>	96.3%
Unfamiliar Words and Phrases	81.5%
Fictional Texts	92.6%
Narrative Nonfiction	92.6%
Poetry	92.6%
Other Nonfiction	44.4%
<b>WRITING</b>	88.9%
Exposition	77.8%
Narration	74.1%
Persuasion	70.4%
Edit Writing	63.0%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	85.2%
Use Reference Materials to Produce a Research Product	81.5%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	81.5%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.6: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 7 Syllabi – by Course Type**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT
<b>Regular Education</b>	72.6%
<b>Special Education</b>	84.9%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.7: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 7 Syllabi – By School**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT
<b>School C</b>	70.2%
<b>School A</b>	26.8%
<b>School B</b>	56.8%
<b>School F</b>	96.5%
<b>School E</b>	80.7%
<b>School D</b>	90.4%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**GRADE 8****Figure 1.8: Percentage of Grade 8 Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 22)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	90.9%
Use Interviewing Techniques	68.2%
Oral Presentations (Groups)	68.2%
Oral Presentations (Individuals)	68.2%
Creative Media Messages	72.7%
Informational Media Messages	68.2%
<b>READING</b>	100.0%
Vocabulary Development	81.8%
Fictional Texts	77.3%
Narrative Nonfiction	81.8%
Poetry	81.8%
Other Nonfiction	50.0%
<b>WRITING</b>	90.9%
Narration	81.8%
Exposition	81.8%
Persuasion	81.8%
Informational	68.2%
Edit Writing	72.7%



STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
<b>RESEARCH</b>	54.5%
Use Reference Materials to Produce a Research Product	50.0%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	86.4%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.9: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 8 Syllabi – by Course Type**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT
<b>Regular Education</b>	80.6%
<b>Special Education</b>	65.5%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.10: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 8 Syllabi – By School**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT
<b>School C</b>	82.9%
<b>School A</b>	47.6%
<b>School B</b>	47.6%
<b>School F</b>	98.4%
<b>School E</b>	81.9%
<b>School D</b>	61.5%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**HILT/HILTEX**

As mentioned in the methodology, middle school-level HILT/HILTEX courses span all grades (6-8), but are expected to align with relevant Virginia SOLs at these grade levels. It is only at the high school level that specific HILT/HILTEX courses are expected to align with a single grade level. Therefore, this sub-section distinguishes the cross-cutting HILT/HILTEX courses from their grade-specific ELA counterparts.

**Figure 1.11: Number and Percent of HILT/HILTEX Syllabi Including Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 18)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	100.0%
Small-Group Activities (6)	83.3%
Group Discussions (7)	77.8%
Oral Presentations (6,7,8)	88.9%
Use Interviewing Techniques (8)	55.6%
Media Literacy (6,7,8)	77.8%
<b>READING</b>	100.0%
Unfamiliar Words and Phrases (6,7)	83.3%
Vocabulary Development (8)	83.3%
Fictional Texts (6,7,8)	100.0%
Narrative Nonfiction (6,7,8)	94.4%
Poetry (6,7,8)	94.4%
Other Nonfiction (6,7,8)	38.9%
<b>WRITING</b>	94.4%
Narration (6,7,8)	100.0%
Description (6)	61.1%
Exposition (6,7,8)	94.4%
Persuasion (6,7,8)	100.0%
Informational (8)	44.4%
Edit Writing (6,7,8)	88.9%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	77.8%
Find, Evaluate, and Select Resources (8)	83.3%
Use Reference Materials to Produce a Research Product (7,8)	83.3%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	100.0%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.12: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on HILT/HILTEX Syllabi – By School**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT
School C	73.3%
School A	-
School B	88.9%
School F	87.5%
School E	87.5%
School D	81.3%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

## CONCLUSIONS

This report reviewed 113 syllabi from six middle schools to determine the alignment of the syllabi with Virginia’s Standards of Learning. It should be noted that the findings discussed in this report are based on topics and phrases mentioned in course syllabi, not the actual material taught in classes throughout the year. As such, the findings should be interpreted with this distinction in mind.

Overall, there was a very wide range in alignment to Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts when examining syllabi by school, ranging from 50.8 percent average standards addressed (School A) to 93.2 percent (School F). However, when examining curriculum alignment by grade level and course type, the range lessened considerably. The alignment to Virginia Standards of Learning by grade level ranges from 72.0 percent for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade to 83.6 percent for HILT/HILTEX courses. HILT/HILTEX syllabi are also more closely aligned to Virginia Standards of Learning (83.6 percent) than regular education (73.7 percent) or special education (74.5 percent) course syllabi.

We note that not all syllabi for the district were included in the materials provided by APS. As such, it is possible that the missing syllabi would alter the findings presented in this report.

## SECTION II: COMPLIANCE OF SYLLABI WITH GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURES- ANALYSIS

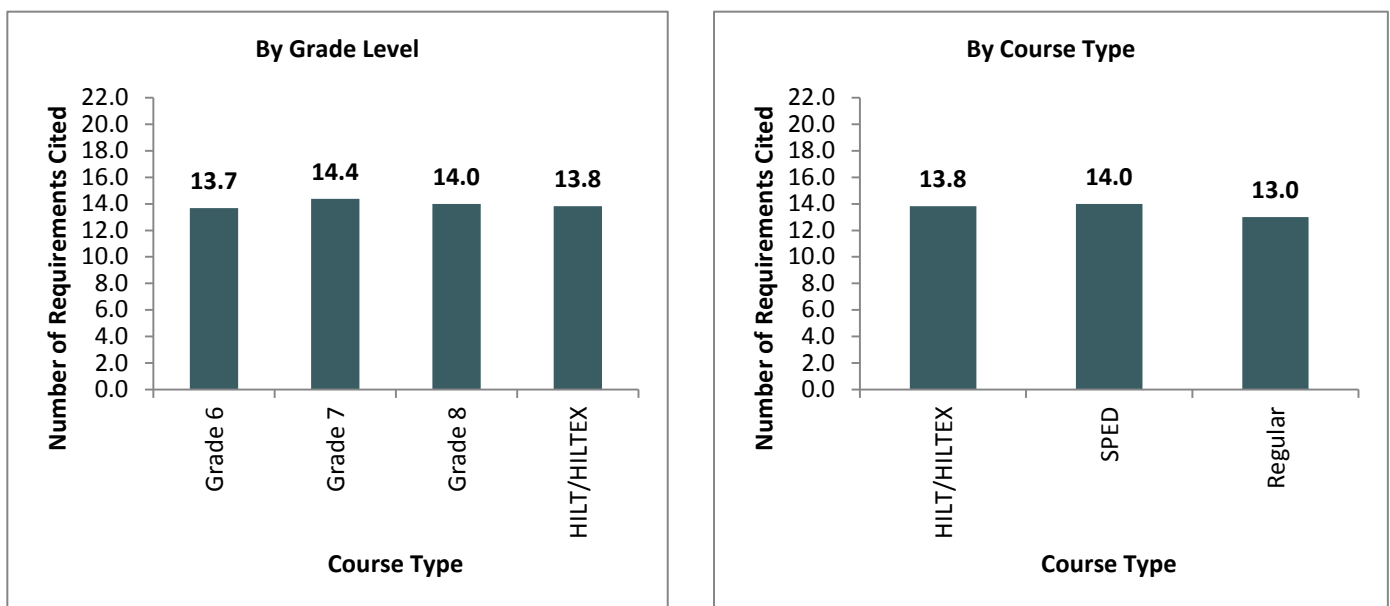
The second section of the analysis examines the extent to which course syllabi comply with APS' grade reporting procedures.

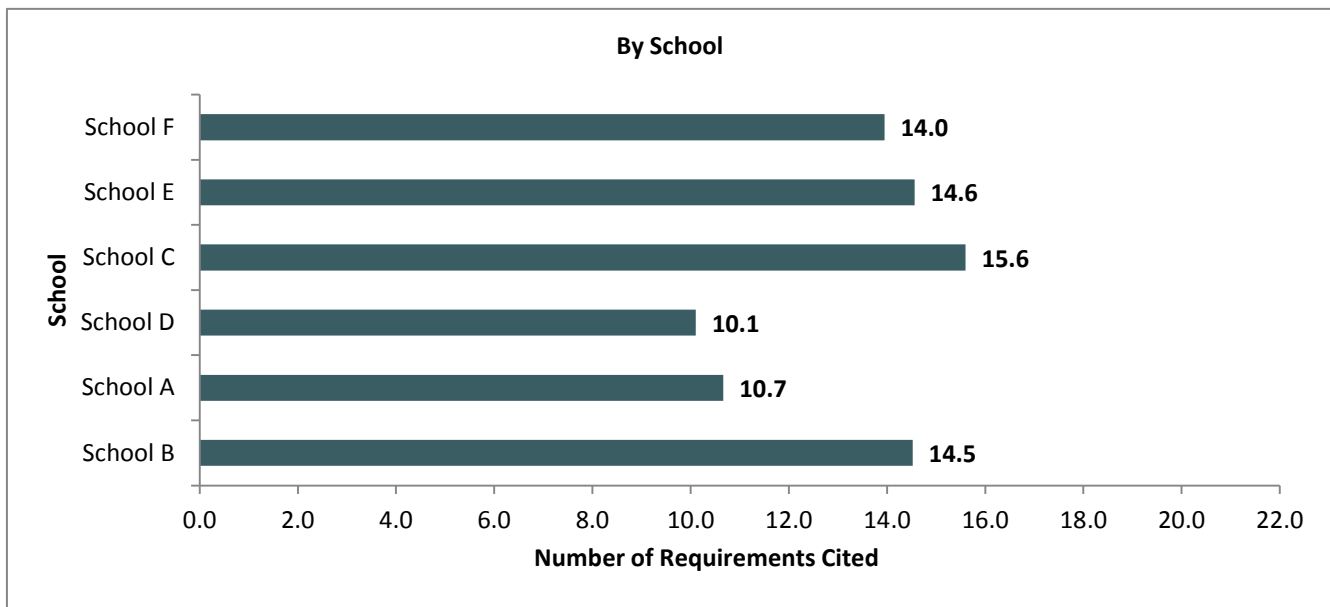
### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Instructors should include information related to grading policies, formative and summative assessments, and standards for make-up work. Out of 22 areas, the average number of reporting requirements cited on syllabi across schools, grades, and course types was 13.4. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the number of information standards included in the ELA syllabi by grade, course type, and school. No syllabus met more than 18 requirements.

The average number of requirements cited varied slightly by grade level from a low of 13.8 at grade 6 to 14.4 at grade 7. Special education classes included, on average, a higher number of requirements than regular or HILT/HILTEX classes: 14.0 requirements cited versus 13.8, respectively. The widest variation in compliance with grade reporting procedures occurs when the syllabi are segmented by school, with a low of 10.1 on average for School D and 15.6 on average for School C.

**Figure 2.1: Average Number of Grade Reporting Requirements Cited by Grade Level, Course Type, and School**





### GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS

Figures 2.2 and 2.3 on the following pages detail the total percentage (out of syllabi examined) of APS course syllabi in compliance with each grade reporting procedure according to grade level. While class syllabi should include information related to grading policies, formative and summative assessments, and standards for make-up work, the alignment of ELA syllabi with these requirements ranged from an overall percentage of zero percent to 99.1 percent. Information included most often in the syllabi include course title (99.1 percent), course description or overview (96.5 percent), text(s) and supplemental materials (92.0 percent), teacher name (86.7 percent), teacher email address (83.2 percent), and APS grading scale (83.2 percent). The information provided the least often was related to exams and the distribution of grades among the four quarters: “final exam exemptions...” (0.0 percent), “final exams count for a maximum...” (1.8 percent), and “quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated...” (5.3 percent).

**Figure 2.2: Percentage of APS Course Syllabi in Compliance with APS Grade Reporting Procedures – By Grade**

GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	GRADE 6 (TOTAL SYLLABI=46)	GRADE 7 (TOTAL SYLLABI=27)	GRADE 8 (TOTAL SYLLABI=22)	HILT/HILTEX (TOTAL SYLLABI=18)	ALL GRADES (TOTAL SYLLABI=113)
Course Title	97.8%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.1%
School Name	47.8%	70.4%	81.8%	66.7%	62.8%
School Year	47.8%	66.7%	90.9%	55.6%	61.9%
Teacher Name	71.7%	92.6%	100.0%	100.0%	86.7%
Teacher E-mail Address	69.6%	96.3%	95.5%	83.3%	83.2%
Course Description or Overview	97.8%	96.3%	100.0%	88.9%	96.5%
Course Objectives and Grade-Level Theme	69.6%	96.3%	90.9%	100.0%	85.0%
Text(s) and Supplemental Materials	89.1%	92.6%	95.5%	94.4%	92.0%
Units of Study with Anticipated Dates of Completion	73.9%	77.8%	59.1%	94.4%	75.2%
Supplies	63.0%	85.2%	63.6%	100.0%	74.3%
Attendance Policy	30.4%	55.6%	50.0%	16.7%	38.1%
Academic Integrity (i.e., Plagiarism)	28.3%	48.1%	31.8%	16.7%	31.9%
APS Grading Scale	65.2%	92.6%	95.5%	100.0%	83.2%
“Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior.”	82.6%	70.4%	63.6%	72.2%	74.3%
Quarterly grades calculated through accumulation of summative and formative assessments	80.4%	70.4%	77.3%	66.7%	75.2%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher	56.5%	44.4%	45.5%	72.2%	54.0%
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade	4.3%	3.7%	0.0%	16.7%	5.3%

GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	GRADE 6 (TOTAL SYLLABI=46)	GRADE 7 (TOTAL SYLLABI=27)	GRADE 8 (TOTAL SYLLABI=22)	HILT/HILTEX (TOTAL SYLLABI=18)	ALL GRADES (TOTAL SYLLABI=113)
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades	2.2%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%
Final exam exemptions are permitted as specified	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters	10.9%	18.5%	4.5%	5.6%	10.6%
Explanation of grading policies for late work	58.7%	88.9%	81.8%	38.9%	67.3%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades	82.6%	66.7%	72.7%	94.4%	78.8%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 2.3: Percentage of APS Course Syllabi in Compliance with APS Grade Reporting Procedures – By Course Type**

GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	REGULAR (TOTAL SYLLABI=69)	SPED (TOTAL SYLLABI=26)	HILT/HILTEX (TOTAL SYLLABI=18)	ALL GRADES (TOTAL SYLLABI=113)
Course Title	100.0%	96.2%	100.0%	99.1%
School Name	59.4%	69.2%	66.7%	62.8%
School Year	63.8%	61.5%	55.6%	61.9%
Teacher Name	82.6%	88.5%	100.0%	86.7%
Teacher E-mail Address	79.7%	92.3%	83.3%	83.2%
Course Description or Overview	97.1%	100.0%	88.9%	96.5%
Course Objectives and Grade-Level Theme	78.3%	92.3%	100.0%	85.0%
Text(s) and Supplemental Materials	94.2%	84.6%	94.4%	92.0%
Units of Study with Anticipated Dates of Completion	75.4%	61.5%	94.4%	75.2%
Supplies	65.2%	80.8%	100.0%	74.3%
Attendance Policy	40.6%	46.2%	16.7%	38.1%
Academic Integrity (i.e., Plagiarism)	33.3%	38.5%	16.7%	31.9%
APS Grading Scale	73.9%	96.2%	100.0%	83.2%
“Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior.”	81.2%	57.7%	72.2%	74.3%
Quarterly grades calculated through accumulation of summative and formative assessments	72.5%	88.5%	66.7%	75.2%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher	42.0%	73.1%	72.2%	54.0%
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade	2.9%	3.8%	16.7%	5.3%



GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	REGULAR (TOTAL SYLLABI=69)	SPED (TOTAL SYLLABI=26)	HILT/HILTEX (TOTAL SYLLABI=18)	ALL GRADES (TOTAL SYLLABI=113)
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	1.8%
Final exam exemptions are permitted as specified	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters	10.1%	15.4%	5.6%	10.6%
Explanation of grading policies for late work	72.5%	73.1%	38.9%	67.3%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades	75.4%	76.9%	94.4%	78.8%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

## CONCLUSIONS

For the 113 syllabi examined for this report, the average number of APS grade reporting procedures included on middle school syllabi (13.4) was lower than the average number observed at the high school level (15.5). By school, School C included the highest average number of requirements (15.6) and School D included the lowest average number of requirements (10.1). Variation in the average number of requirements included was minimal when results were disaggregated by grade level: grade 7 syllabi included the highest average number of requirements (14.4) while grade 6 syllabi included the lowest average number of requirements (13.7). Similarly, the average numbers of requirements included by course type were similar: ranging from 13.0 for regular courses to 14.0 for SPED courses. These data suggest that the school in which a teacher works is a better predictor of the number of standards he or she includes on his or her syllabus than the grade level or course type he or she teaches.

While class syllabi should include information related to grading policies, formative and summative assessments, and standards for make-up work, the alignment of ELA syllabi with these requirements ranged from an overall percentage of zero percent to 99.1 percent. Information included most often in the syllabi include course title (99.1 percent), course description or overview (96.5 percent), text(s) and supplemental materials (92.0 percent), teacher name (86.7 percent), teacher email address (83.2 percent), and APS grading scale (83.2 percent). The information provided the least often was related to exams and the distribution of grades among the four quarters.

We note that not all syllabi for the district were included in the materials provided by APS. As such, it is possible that the missing syllabi would alter the findings presented in this report.

## PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Hanover Research is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds member expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.

<http://www.hanoverresearch.com/evaluation/index.php>

## CAVEAT

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties which extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of Hanover Research or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every member. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, Hanover Research is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Members requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.



1750 H Street NW, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20006

P 202.756.2971 F 866.808.6585  
[www.hanoverresearch.com](http://www.hanoverresearch.com)

# Articulation and Alignment of the APS ELA Program with State Standards and County Policy – High Schools

Prepared for Arlington Public Schools

January 2013



In the following report, Hanover Research assesses the extent to which the secondary English language arts (ELA) curriculum in Arlington Public Schools (APS) aligns with the Standards of Learning specified by the Virginia Department of Education. To that end, we examine the syllabi of all APS ELA courses and indicate the core instructional strands mentioned by each teacher. In addition, we evaluate the extent to which the syllabi comply with APS grade reporting procedures. When reviewing the syllabi for alignment and compliance purposes, we discuss district-wide trends and note any differences across grade levels and student groups.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary and Key Findings .....</b>	<b>46</b>
INTRODUCTION .....	46
METHODOLOGY .....	48
Note on Advanced Placement/IB and HILT/HILTEX Courses .....	50
Report Structure .....	51
KEY FINDINGS.....	51
<b>Section I: Alignment of Syllabi with Virginia Standards of Learning – Analysis .....</b>	<b>53</b>
SUMMARY ANALYSIS.....	53
GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS.....	54
Grade 9 .....	55
Grade 10 .....	56
Grade 11 .....	57
Grade 12 .....	58
CONCLUSIONS .....	59
<b>Section II: Compliance of Syllabi with Grade Reporting Procedures – Analysis .....</b>	<b>61</b>
SUMMARY ANALYSIS.....	61
GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS.....	62
CONCLUSIONS .....	67

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

In the following document, Hanover Research assesses the extent to which the secondary English language arts (ELA) curriculum in Arlington Public Schools (APS) aligns with the Standards of Learning specified by the Virginia Department of Education. To that end, we examine the syllabi of all APS ELA courses and indicate the core instructional strands mentioned by each teacher. In addition, we evaluate the extent to which the syllabi comply with APS grade reporting procedures. When reviewing the syllabi for alignment and compliance purposes, we discuss district-wide trends and note any differences across schools, grade levels, and student groups.

The Virginia Department of Education, through the Standards of Learning (SOLs), specifies the content knowledge, skills, and understanding that the state's schools must provide to students in English language arts (ELA). In this report, we will explore whether or not the content of a syllabus varies substantively depending on the nature of the students taught, with students segmented into four groups: students in the regular curriculum; students in an accelerated curriculum (i.e., Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB)); special education students; and English language learners (High Intensity Language Training (HILT) or High Intensity Language Training Extension (HILTEX)). Irrespective of the nature of the students taught, all ELA courses must deliver the required content to enable students to demonstrate proficiency or advanced levels of achievement on the appropriate end-of-year or end-of-course SOL assessment.

The SOLs for high school (grades 9-12)<sup>1</sup> students indicate a set of learning objectives within each of the four core instructional strands: communication (speaking, listening, and media literacy); reading; writing; and research. In the following table, we provide an overview of the learning objectives for each high school grade level.

**Figure I: Overview of Virginia SOLs for High School**

GRADE 9 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 10 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 11 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 12 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>
Oral Presentations (Independent)	Small-Group Learning Activities	Informative Presentations	Formal Oral Presentation (Group or Individual)

<sup>1</sup> "English Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework 2010, Grade 9-Grade 12." Virginia Department of Education. [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/frameworks/english\\_frameworks/2010/framework\\_english\\_9-12.doc](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/frameworks/english_frameworks/2010/framework_english_9-12.doc)

GRADE 9 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 10 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 11 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	GRADE 12 STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Oral Presentations (Small Groups)	Visual Media Messages	Persuasive Presentations	Inclusion or Exclusion of Values and Points of View
Auditory Media Messages	Verbal Media Messages	Inclusion or Exclusion of Values and Points of View	How Media Influences Beliefs and Behavior
Visual Media Messages		How Media Influences Beliefs and Behavior	
Written Media Messages			
<b>READING</b>	<b>READING</b>	<b>READING</b>	<b>READING</b>
Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Development	Vocabulary Development
Narrative Texts	Literary Texts of Different Cultures	Relationships among American Literature, History, and Culture	British Literature
Narrative Nonfiction	Literary Texts of Different Eras	Nonfiction Texts	Literature of Other Cultures
Poetry	Nonfiction Texts		Nonfiction Texts
Drama			
Other Nonfiction			
<b>WRITING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>	<b>WRITING</b>
Narrative	Exposition	Persuasion	Expository and Informational
Expository	Analysis	Edit Own Writing	Analyses
Persuasive	Edit Own Writing	Edit Peer Writing	Persuasive and Argumentative
Edit Own Writing	Edit Peer Writing		Edit and Revise Writing
Edit Peer Writing			
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>RESEARCH</b>
Use Print, Electronic, Online, and Other Resources to Produce a Research Product	Collect, Evaluate, Organize and Present Information to Create a Research Product	Analyze, Evaluate, Synthesize, and Organize Information to Produce a Research Product	Write Documented Research Papers
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>
<b>TOTAL = 22</b>	<b>TOTAL = 17</b>	<b>TOTAL = 16</b>	<b>TOTAL = 17</b>

In addition to alignment with state-wide SOLs, we also evaluate the extent to which course syllabi comply with APS’ grade reporting procedures. The District codified the procedures in two documents: Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) 20-5.150 Communication – Grade Reporting to Parents (Grades 6-12);<sup>2</sup> and Checklist for Secondary ELA/Reading Syllabus.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> “Policy Implementation Procedures: 20-5.150 Communication – Grade Reporting to Parents (Grades 6-12).” Arlington Public Schools, November 4, 2011, pp. 3-4.



procedures delineated in the two documents guide APS teachers when communicating goals, progress, and expected outcomes to students and parents. The grade reporting procedures for all grades are listed in the following table.

**Figure II: APS Grade Reporting Procedures, All Grades**

All APS Syllabi Should Include the Following Grade Reporting Procedures			
Course Title	School Name	School Year	Teacher Name
Teacher E-mail Address	Course Description or Overview	Course Objectives and Grade-Level Theme	Text(s) and Supplemental Materials
Units of Study with Anticipated Dates of Completion	Supplies	Attendance Policy	Academic Integrity (i.e., Plagiarism)
APS Grading Scale	“Student grades reflect achievement and not student behavior.”	Quarterly grades calculated through accumulation of summative and formative assessments	Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade	Final exams count for a maximum of 20% with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades	Final exam exemptions are permitted as specified	Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters
Explanation of grading policies for late work	Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades		
<b>Total = 22</b>			

**METHODOLOGY**

In this report, we review the syllabi of **APS high school ELA courses** to determine the degree of alignment with state and district standards. Approximately 167 syllabi were received from APS’ nine high school programs, which included the following:

- Wakefield High School
- Washington and Lee High School
- Yorktown High School
- H.B. Woodlawn Secondary Program (comprehensive school for students who need less restriction and more freedom to be successful in school)
- Arlington Mill High School (part of the High School Continuation Program)
- Langston High School (part of the High School Continuation Program)

<http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Shared/school%20board%20policies/20-instr/20-5.150-communication-grade-rept-parents-%20grades%206-12-PIP.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “Checklist for Secondary ELA/Reading Syllabus.” Arlington Public Schools. ELA Secondary Syllabus Checklist.doc

- Arlington Career Center (offers vocational, technical, academic, and enrichment programs to high school, middle school, elementary school, and adult students)
- New Directions Alternative Program (offers academic, counseling, and covational opportunities for academically unsuccessful students)
- Teenage Parenting Programs (an alternative school for pregnant and parenting teens)

Further, we note the following parameters that were used to align HILT/HILTEX courses with grade-level SOLs:

- HILTA, HILTB, and English 9 HILTEX courses should all align to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade SOLs.
- English 10 HILTEX courses should all align to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade SOLs.

Arlington provided grade-level alignments for all SPED courses. Additionally, eight SPED and HILT courses were removed from our analysis due to the fact that there was no expectation that they align with the SOLs. These courses were:

- HILT A (BP) Accelerated Literacy Language Development (Course 20775, Arlington Mill)
- Reading/Writing HB/HX (Course 20794, Arlington Mill)
- Reading & Writing in Content Area, Science (Course 20794, Arlington Mill)
- Accelerated Literacy English/Reading (Course 20776, Career Center)
- SPED English Language Arts (Course 20003, Parenting Teens)
- SPED Literature and Composition (Course 20003, Wakefield)\_
- SPED English Composition and Literature (Course 20003, Washington & Lee)
- SPED Literature and Composition (Course 20003, Yorktown)

In order to determine the alignment of the syllabi with the Virginia SOLs, Hanover created assessment tables that examine the alignment of syllabi from each school to the strand and learning objectives outlined in Figure I, above. A strand or learning objective was considered to be addressed by a syllabus if the syllabus *made explicit mention* of that area. Due to the fact that the number of required standards differed by grade level (from 16 for grade 11 syllabi to 22 for grade 9 syllabi), Hanover opted to examine the *percentage of standards addressed* on each syllabus rather than the *total number of standards addressed*. As an example, the calculation used to determine the percentage of grade 9 standards addressed was as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of SOL standards addressed accross all grade 9 syllabi}}{(22 \times \text{Total number of syllabi received})}$$

Similar calculations were used to calculate the percentage of standards addressed by course type and school. This methodology allowed us to more easily compare our findings across different subgroups within the district (i.e. grade level, course type, and district high school programs).

We used a similar methodology to examine the alignment of ELA syllabi with APS grade reporting procedures. However, because all APS high school syllabi – irrespective of grade level—are required to address the same 22 procedures, we were able to compare our findings by *number of standards addressed* rather than by *percentage of standards addressed* across all syllabi.

Materials provided by APS indicated that there are currently 233 syllabi currently in use across all district high school ELA programs. A total of 208 syllabi were submitted to Hanover for this review, for a **response rate of 89.2 percent**.

The received syllabi were reviewed according to rubrics approved in collaboration with the district. We note that although 208 total syllabi were received, only approximately 167 syllabi were reviewed in our analysis. This discrepancy is due to the fact that many APS courses that are offered over two semesters have identical syllabi for each semester. An attempt has been made to count unique courses and unique syllabi. For example, courses indicated as two-course classes have been counted as having only one syllabus. Additionally, one course is offered to students in all grades 9-12 simultaneously. For the first part of our analysis, we analyzed the extent to which this one syllabus addresses the SOLs for each grade level individually. However, for the second part of our analysis, we treat this course as having one unique syllabus to evaluate the extent to which this syllabus complies with APS reporting procedures.

Finally, we note that many abbreviations are used in these tables in order to conserve space, including “AP,” to indicate an Advanced Placement course, “Rdg” to indicate a reading course, and “Int” to indicate intensified courses.

#### *NOTE ON ADVANCED PLACEMENT/IB AND HILT/HILTEX COURSES*

Advanced courses and courses for English language learners often used syllabi that addressed alternate standards in addition to or in lieu of addressing the Virginia SOLs. HILT and HILTEX syllabi, for instance, often addressed World-Class Instructional Design (WIDA) and Assessment [English Language Development Standards](#), which are designed to inform and guide instructional practices in ELL classrooms. Similarly, Advanced Placement courses often addressed College Board’s [Standards for College Success™ in English Language Arts](#), which are designed to “help states, school districts, and schools provide all students with the rigorous education that will prepare them for success in college, opportunity in the workplace, and effective participation in civic life.”<sup>4</sup> IB courses, in turn, frequently addressed

---

<sup>4</sup> “College Board Standards for College Success: English Language Arts.” 2006. College Board. P. vi.  
[http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/about/association/academic/english-language-arts\\_cbcs.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/about/association/academic/english-language-arts_cbcs.pdf)

International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) [Subject Outlines](#), which “explain the major features of [each IB course], and outline the syllabus and assessment requirements.”<sup>5</sup>

We note that APS expects that the courses described above will have syllabi that address *both* the Virginia SOLs and the respective additional standards noted. In other words, high levels of alignment with the English Language Development Standards should not preclude syllabi from also addressing the Virginia SOLs.

### *REPORT STRUCTURE*

The report is organized according to the following two sections:

- **Section I: Alignment of Syllabi with Virginia Standards of Learning** presents an analysis the syllabi of all APS high school ELA courses to determine the degree of alignment with state standards.
- **Section II: Compliance of Syllabi with Grade Reporting Procedures** evaluates the extent to which course syllabi comply with APS’ grade reporting procedures.

The key findings from our review of APS secondary ELA syllabi are presented below.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Overall, there was a wide range of alignment with Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts when examining alignment by school, ranging from 48.7 percent of standards addressed in an average reviewed syllabus (School I) to 74.7 percent (School A). However, when examining curriculum alignment by grade level and course type, the range lessened (from 57.8 percent at grade 12 to 67.8 percent at grade 11). **A total of 17.5 percent of grade 9 syllabi, 23.1 percent of grade 10 syllabi, 23.5 percent of grade 11 syllabi, and 12.8 percent of grade 12 syllabi aligned to all Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts.**
- Nearly 60 percent (59.4 percent) of all syllabi mention the Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts, suggesting a general awareness among teachers of these requirements. However, a closer analysis revealed that many (approximately 10 percent) of these syllabi still referenced the 2002 Standards of Learning rather than the 2010 Standards of Learning. In general, **syllabi were more strongly aligned to the reading and writing strands than the communication and research strands.**
- A variation in the degree to which syllabi address state standards also exists when examining alignment by course type (from 54.3 percent of standards addressed across HILT/HILTEX syllabi to 67.6 percent of standards addressed across syllabi for regular courses). In general Advanced/IB and regular education courses appear to

<sup>5</sup> “Subject Outlines.” International Baccalaureate Organization.  
<http://www.ibo.org/diploma/assessment/subjectoutlines/>

- include more references to SOL standards than HILT/HILTEX and special education courses.
- Overall, syllabi for AP/IB courses at the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade levels addressed a higher percentage of Virginia SOLs than syllabi regular courses at these grade levels. AP/IB syllabi at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade levels, however, addressed a lower percentage of Virginia SOLs than syllabi for regular courses at these levels.
  - In general, grade reporting standards appear more frequently articulated in course syllabi than grade-level SOL standards. Course title (98.2 percent), teacher name (98.2 percent), text(s) and supplemental materials (90.4 percent), and the APS grading scale (93.4 percent) were frequently present. Information pertaining to final exams and the calculation of final exam grades into the overall course grade was frequently absent from the syllabi examined. Inclusion of an academic integrity policy and an attendance policy was also low, particularly at grade 9.
  - The highest level of alignment to Virginia's Standards of Learning for ELA as well as the highest level of articulation of grade reporting standards was found in grade 11 syllabi. This high level of alignment at the 11<sup>th</sup> grade level is perhaps expected, due to the fact that the SOL exam is administered at this level.

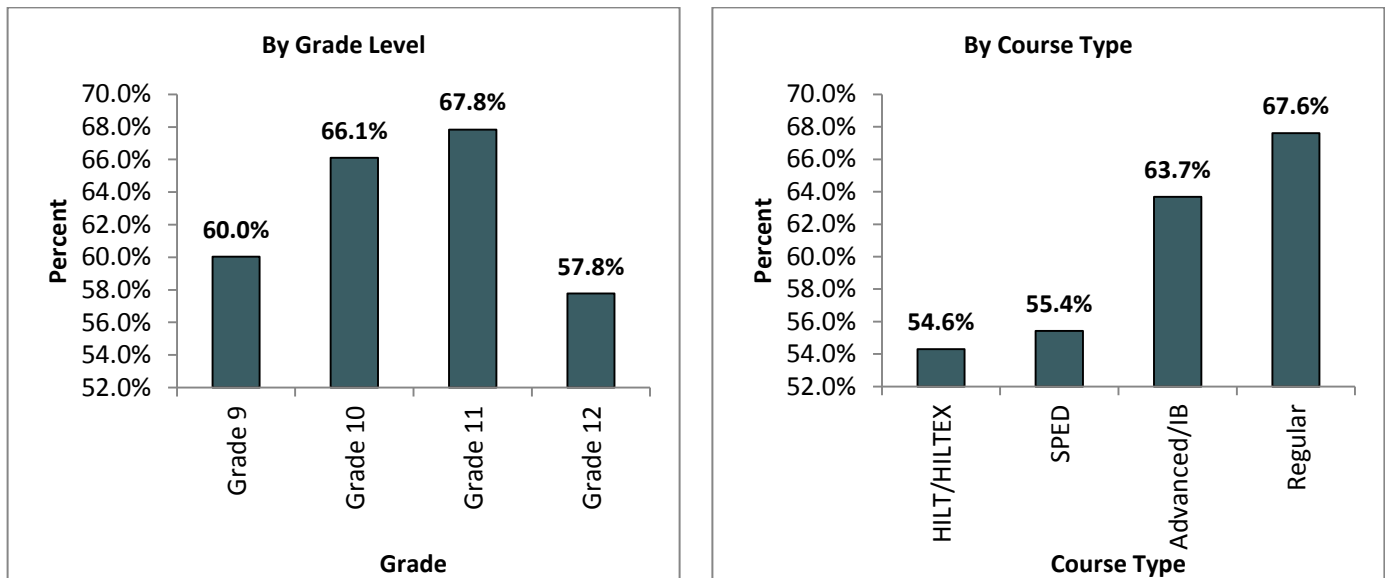
## SECTION I: ALIGNMENT OF SYLLABI WITH VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING – ANALYSIS

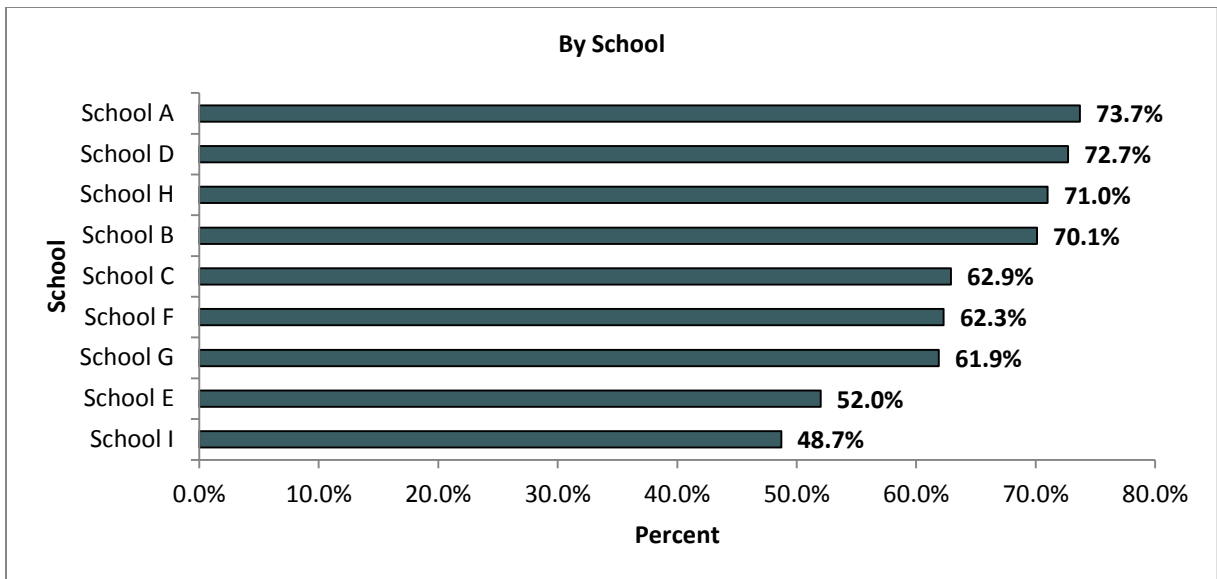
The first section of this report examines the ELA syllabi to determine how often there is stated alignment with the Virginia Standards of Learning. According to the standards outlined by the Virginia Department of Education, students should receive English language arts instruction across four strands: communication, reading, writing, and research. Specific learning objectives under these four strands vary by grade level.

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

As the total number of learning objectives for ELA differs by grade level, the following figures present the number of addressed standards as a percent of the total possible standards for each level. Overall, there is a wide range of alignment to the Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts when examining syllabi by school, ranging from 48.7 percent average standards addressed to 74.7 percent. A smaller gap in curriculum alignment exists when examining syllabi by grade level (from 57.8 percent at grade 12 to 67.8 percent at grade 11) and course type (from 54.3 percent for HILT/HILTEX courses to 67.6 percent for regular courses). Syllabi for grades 10 and 11 address the highest percentage of Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts. Advanced/IB and regular education courses also address a higher percentage of SOL ELA standards than HILT/HILTEX and special education courses. Regular course syllabi address the highest overall percentage of SOL ELA standards.

**Figure 1.1: Percentage of Addressed Virginia Standards of Learning on APS Syllabi by Grade Level, Course Type, and School**





## GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS

Below, we provide a detailed analysis of syllabi by grade level. For each grade level, we offer information on the percentage of individual standards addressed by grade-level syllabi, as well as the percentage of *overall* standards addressed by course type and school. A few notable trends are discussed here.

First, a number of syllabi examined aligned to all the ELA standards, including a mention of the Virginia Standards of Learning. A total of 17.5 percent of grade 9 syllabi, 23.1 percent of grade 10 syllabi, 23.5 percent of grade 11 syllabi, and 12.8 percent of grade 12 syllabi included a reference to all the necessary standards.

In general, **syllabi were more strongly aligned to the reading and writing strands than the communication and research strands**. Additionally, it was somewhat common for a syllabus to mention the importance of communication, reading, writing, or, research without providing specific examples of the practices that would lead to these learning objectives. About 90 percent of syllabi at all grade levels mention reading and writing. However, no single learning objective is mentioned with this same frequency. This lack of detail suggests that Hanover's analysis should be interpreted with caution: the information presented on the syllabi may not be an exact interpretation of what is taught in the course.

Next, nearly 60 percent (59.4 percent) of syllabi across all schools, grade levels, and courses mention the Virginia Standards of Learning for English Language Arts, suggesting a general awareness among teachers of these requirements. However, **a closer analysis revealed that many of these syllabi still referenced the 2002 Standards of Learning rather than the 2010 Standards of Learning** (due to be fully implemented by 2012-2013).<sup>6</sup> Hanover was able to

<sup>6</sup> This information was ascertained through a review of the Standards of Learning on the Virginia Department of Education website. Many syllabi directly reference Standards of learning that no longer exist in 2010 such as

identify at least 16 syllabi (approximately 10 percent of the total syllabi reviewed) that clearly contain references to the 2002 Virginia Standards of Learning. This may provide one explanation as to why some of **the newer standards (e.g., media literacy and peer editing of writing) appear to be the least aligned learning objectives across grade levels.**

More detailed analysis of the findings discussed above can be found in the following tables.

*GRADE 9*

**Figure 1.2: Percentage of Grade 9 ELA Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 58)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF SYLLABI ADDRESSING STANDARD
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	81.0%
Oral Presentations (Independent)	67.2%
Oral Presentations (Small Groups)	60.3%
Auditory Media Messages	43.1%
Visual Media Messages	25.9%
Written Media Messages	22.4%
<b>READING</b>	94.8%
Vocabulary Development	79.3%
Narrative Texts	62.1%
Narrative Nonfiction	62.1%
Poetry	60.3%
Drama	51.7%
Other Nonfiction	55.2%
<b>WRITING</b>	94.8%
Narrative	65.5%
Expository	63.8%
Persuasive	53.4%
Edit Own Writing	63.8%
Edit Peer Writing	25.9%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	65.5%
Use Print, Electronic, Online, and Other Resources to Produce a Research Product	56.9%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	65.5%

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

Grade 9 standard “9.8 The student will credit the sources of both quoted and paraphrased ideas.” See: “English Standards of Learning (SOL) – Previous Version, Adopted 2002.” Virginia Department of Education. [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/english/2002/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/2002/index.shtml)



**Figure 1.3: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 9 Syllabi – by Course Type**

COURSE TYPE	PERCENT
Advanced	76.4%
Regular	72.4%
HILT/HILTEX	51.0%
SPED	42.4%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.4: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 9 Syllabi – by School**

SCHOOL	PERCENT
School A	55.7%
School B	54.1%
School C	70.5%
School F	77.3%
School G	65.2%
School H	62.5%
School I	52.3%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

*GRADE 10*

**Figure 1.5: Percentage of Grade 10 Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 39)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF SYLLABI ADDRESSING STANDARD
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	69.2%
Small-Group Learning Activities	66.7%
Visual Media Messages	48.7%
Verbal Media Messages	38.5%
<b>READING</b>	92.3%
Vocabulary Development	89.7%
Literary Texts of Different Cultures	53.8%
Literary Texts of Different Eras	41.0%
Nonfiction Texts	82.1%
<b>WRITING</b>	92.3%
Exposition	59.0%
Analysis	61.5%
Edit Own Writing	74.4%
Edit Peer Writing	38.5%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	82.1%
Collect, Evaluate, Organize and Present Information to Create a Research Product	66.7%

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF SYLLABI ADDRESSING STANDARD
MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	66.7%

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.6: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 10 Syllabi – by Course Type**

COURSE TYPE	PERCENT
Advanced	65.2%
Regular	64.0%
HILT/HILTEX	72.3%
SPED	66.7%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.7: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 10 Syllabi – by School**

SCHOOL	PERCENT
School A	100.0%
School B	100.0%
School C	62.7%
School E	52.9%
School F	70.6%
School G	63.2%
School H	91.8%
School I	37.4%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

*GRADE 11*

**Figure 1.8: Percentage of Grade 11 ELA Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 34)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	67.6%
Informative Presentations	61.8%
Persuasive Presentations	44.1%
Inclusion or Exclusion of Values and Points of View	35.3%
How Media Influences Beliefs and Behavior	38.2%
<b>READING</b>	94.1%
Vocabulary Development	85.3%
Relationships among American Literature, History, and Culture	70.6%
Nonfiction Texts	82.4%
<b>WRITING</b>	82.4%
Persuasion	82.4%
Edit Own Writing	82.4%

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Edit Peer Writing	50.0%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>73.5%</b>
Analyze, Evaluate, Synthesize, and Organize Information to Produce a Research Product	67.6%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>61.8%</b>

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.9: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 11 Syllabi – by Course Type**

COURSE TYPE	PERCENT
<b>Advanced</b>	63.5%
<b>Regular</b>	69.4%
<b>SPED</b>	81.3%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.10: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 11 Syllabi – by School**

SCHOOL	PERCENT
<b>School A</b>	100.0%
<b>School B</b>	100.0%
<b>School C</b>	52.1%
<b>School D</b>	50.0%
<b>School E</b>	62.5%
<b>School F</b>	62.5%
<b>School G</b>	69.8%
<b>School H</b>	73.8%
<b>School I</b>	56.3%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

*GRADE 12*

**Figure 1.11: Percentage of Grade 12 ELA Syllabi that Address Virginia SOL Standards  
(Total Syllabi Reviewed = 39)**

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
<b>COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>43.6%</b>
Formal Oral Presentation (Group or Individual)	76.9%
Inclusion or Exclusion of Values and Points of View	17.9%
How Media Influences Beliefs and Behavior	17.9%
<b>READING</b>	<b>94.9%</b>
Vocabulary Development	76.9%
British Literature	64.1%
Literature of Other Cultures	64.1%

STRAND AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Nonfiction Texts	46.2%
<b>WRITING</b>	<b>89.7%</b>
Expository and Informational	64.1%
Analyses	64.1%
Persuasive and Argumentative	41.0%
Edit and Revise Writing	74.4%
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>56.4%</b>
Write Documented Research Papers	48.7%
<b>MENTION VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</b>	<b>41.0%</b>

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

**Figure 1.12: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 12 Syllabi – by Course Type**

COURSE TYPE	PERCENT
<b>Advanced</b>	50.8%
<b>Regular</b>	60.7%
<b>SPED</b>	66.2%

Source: Hanover Research and Arlington Public Schools

**Figure 1.13: Percentage of Total Addressed Standards on Grade 12 Syllabi – by School**

	PERCENT
<b>School A</b>	100.0%
<b>School B</b>	98.0%
<b>School C</b>	58.8%
<b>School E</b>	41.2%
<b>School F</b>	52.9%
<b>School G</b>	48.5%
<b>School H</b>	65.3%
<b>School I</b>	50.0%

Source: Hanover Research and Arlington Public Schools

## CONCLUSIONS

A review of approximately 167 syllabi of Arlington Public Schools’ 9 high school programs reveals a moderate level of alignment to the Virginia’s Standards of Learning for English language arts. The low number of learning objectives articulated on syllabi suggests that an analysis based solely on the syllabi may not provide an accurate indicator of the articulation of goals across levels and between schools. An analysis of curricula, lesson plans, and assignments has the potential to be much more accurate.

Small but notable differences exist across schools, grade levels, and course types. The highest level of alignment to Virginia’s Standards of Learning for ELA was found in grade 11 syllabi, while the lowest level of alignment with SOLs was found in grade 12 syllabi. Further,

in general, AP/IB and regular course syllabi were more likely to be aligned with SOLs than HILT/HILTEX and SPED course syllabi. Overall, AP/IB syllabi were less likely to address the Virginia SOLs than regular syllabi. However, AP/IB courses offered in grades 9 and 10 were *more likely* to address the Virginia SOLs than regular course syllabi for these grade levels.

In order to improve its current level of alignment with state standards, Arlington Public Schools may consider raising awareness around learning objectives new to the 2010 version of the ELA standards (for example, “media literacy”). Additionally, Arlington Public Schools may wish to clarify procedures for courses where more than one set of standards exist (e.g., HILT/HILTEX and advanced placement courses).

## SECTION II: COMPLIANCE OF SYLLABI WITH GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURES – ANALYSIS

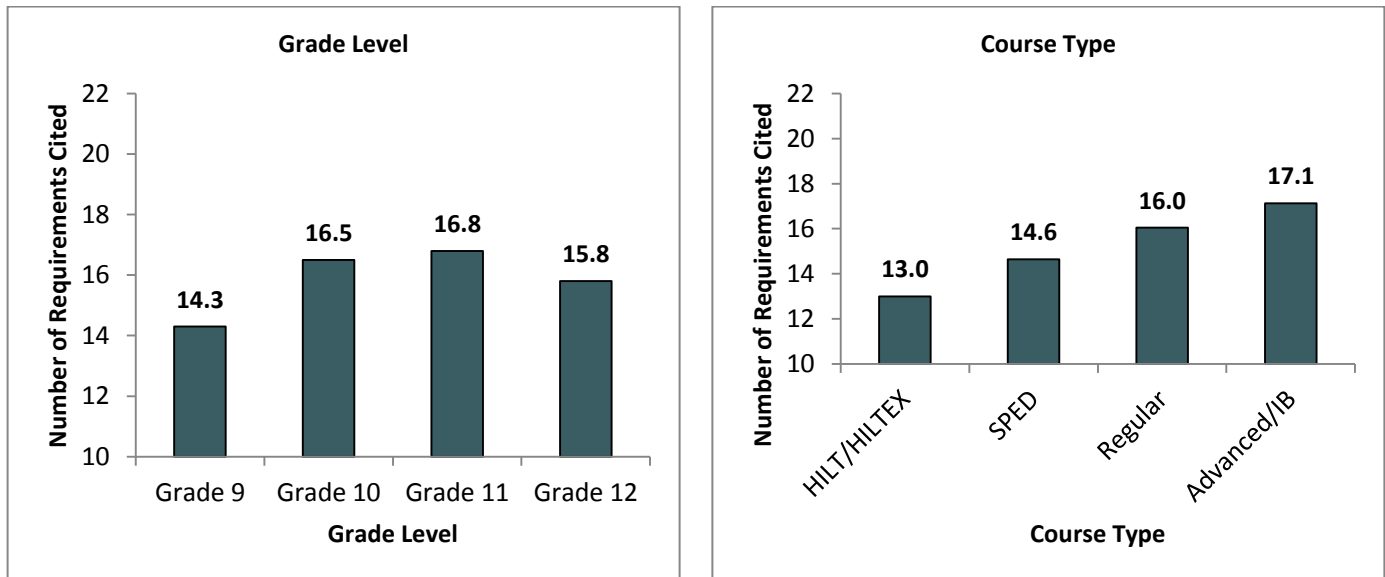
The second section of the analysis examines the extent to which course syllabi comply with APS’ grade reporting procedures.

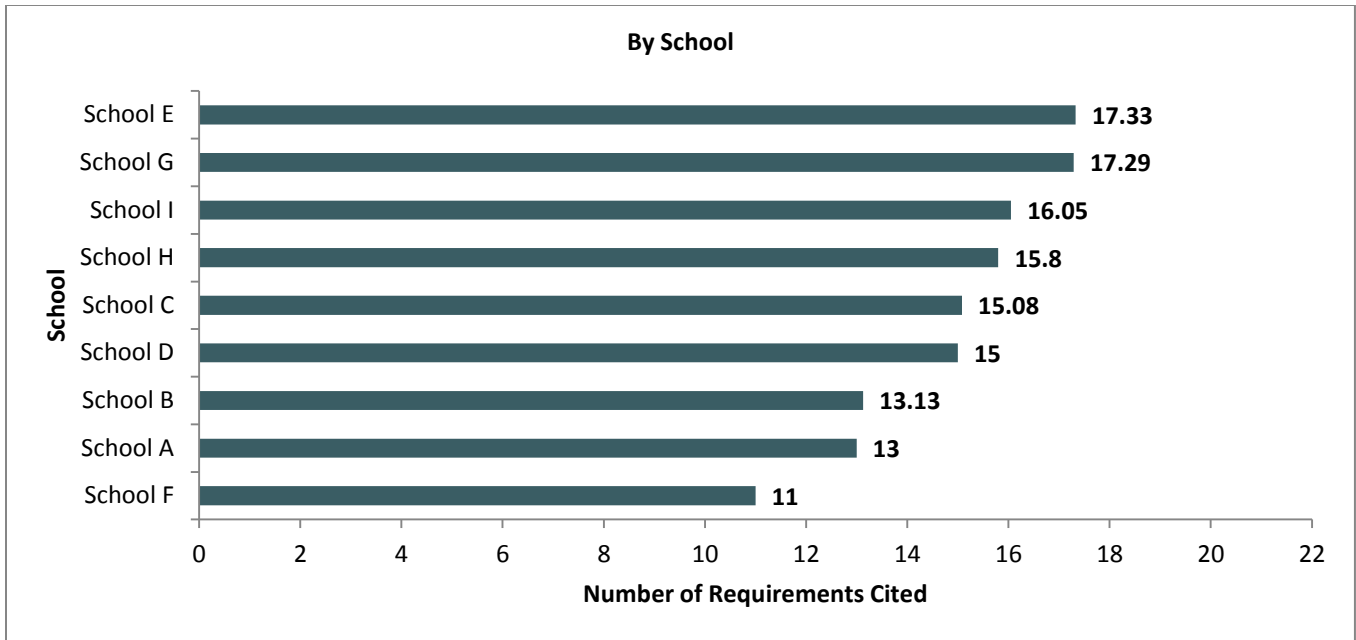
### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Instructors should include information related to grading policies, formative and summative assessments, and standards for make-up work. Out of 22 areas, the average number of grade reporting requirements cited across schools, grades, and course types was 15.5. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the average number of information standards included in the ELA syllabi by grade, course type, and school. Only one syllabus met all 22 requirements and 25 syllabi met 20 or more of the grade reporting requirements.

The average number of requirements cited varied slightly by grade level from a low of 14.3 at grade 9 to a high of 16.8 at grade 11. A similar variation can be seen by course type, from a low of 13.1 for HILT/HILTEX courses to a high of 17.1 for advanced/IB courses. Finally, the widest variation in compliance with grade reporting procedures occurs when segmented by school with a low of 11.0 at one school to a high of 17.3 at two schools.

**Figure 2.1: Average Number of Grade Reporting Requirements Addressed by Grade Level, Course Type, and School**





### GRADE LEVEL ANALYSIS

Figures 2.2 and 2.3 on the following pages detail the total percentage (out of syllabi examined) of APS course syllabi in compliance with each grade reporting procedure by grade level and course type. While some information was included on the majority of syllabi, other information was rarely present. For example, course title (98.2 percent), teacher name (98.2 percent), text(s) and supplemental materials (90.4 percent), and the APS grading scale (93.4 percent) were frequently present. Information pertaining to final exam exemptions and the calculation of final exam grades into the overall course grade was frequently absent from the syllabi examined (included on only 15.6 and 38.3 percent of syllabi, respectively). Other less frequently-cited reporting procedures were the inclusion of quarterly exams, final exams, and midterms in quarterly and final grades (40.7 percent); the contingency that final exams count for a maximum of 20% of the final grade (41.9 percent); the academic integrity policy (56.9 percent); the attendance policy (57.5 percent); and the mention of units of study with anticipated dates of completion (58.1 percent).

**Figure 2.2: Percentage of APS Course Syllabi in Compliance with APS Grade Reporting Procedures – By Grade**

GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	GRADE 9 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 57)	GRADE 10 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 38)	GRADE 11 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 33)	GRADE 12 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 39)*	ALL GRADES (TOTAL SYLLABI = 167)
Course Title	96.5%	100.0%	97.0%	100.0%	98.2%
School Name	70.2%	78.9%	69.7%	76.9%	73.7%
School Year	75.4%	92.1%	72.7%	76.9%	79.0%
Teacher Name	98.2%	100.0%	97.0%	97.4%	98.2%
Teacher E-mail Address	84.2%	86.8%	81.8%	84.6%	84.4%
Course Description or Overview	87.7%	86.8%	100.0%	79.5%	88.0%
Course Objectives and Grade-Level Theme	87.7%	81.6%	78.8%	79.5%	82.6%
Text(s) and Supplemental Materials	87.7%	84.2%	93.9%	97.4%	90.4%
Units of Study with Anticipated Dates of Completion	43.9%	60.5%	75.8%	61.5%	58.1%
Supplies	71.9%	86.8%	84.8%	79.5%	79.6%
Attendance Policy	38.6%	73.7%	63.6%	64.1%	57.5%
Academic Integrity (i.e., Plagiarism)	26.3%	68.4%	84.8%	66.7%	56.9%
APS Grading Scale	86.0%	94.7%	97.0%	100.0%	93.4%
“Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior.”	75.4%	78.9%	78.8%	69.2%	75.4%
Quarterly grades calculated through accumulation of summative and formative assessments	86.0%	94.7%	90.9%	94.9%	91.0%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher	61.4%	76.3%	66.7%	64.1%	66.5%



GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	GRADE 9 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 57)	GRADE 10 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 38)	GRADE 11 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 33)	GRADE 12 (TOTAL SYLLABI = 39)*	ALL GRADES (TOTAL SYLLABI = 167)
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade	33.3%	42.1%	51.5%	41.0%	40.7%
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades	36.8%	44.7%	51.5%	38.5%	41.9%
Final exam exemptions are permitted as specified	15.8%	10.5%	18.2%	17.9%	15.6%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters	29.8%	44.7%	54.5%	30.8%	38.3%
Explanation of grading policies for late work	57.9%	78.9%	81.8%	79.5%	72.5%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades	78.9%	81.6%	93.9%	79.5%	82.6%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

\*Includes one syllabus that crosses all four grade levels.

**Figure 2.3: Percentage of APS Course Syllabi in Compliance with APS Grade Reporting Procedures – By Course Type**

GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	AP/IB (TOTAL SYLLABI = 49)	REGULAR (TOTAL SYLLABI = 70)*	SPED (TOTAL SYLLABI = 14)	HILT/HILTEX (TOTAL SYLLABI = 34)	ALL COURSE TYPES (TOTAL SYLLABI = 167)
Course Title	100.0%	98.6%	85.7%	100.0%	98.2%
School Name	73.5%	80.0%	57.1%	70.6%	73.7%
School Year	81.6%	82.9%	85.7%	64.7%	79.0%
Teacher Name	100.0%	98.6%	85.7%	100.0%	98.2%
Teacher E-mail Address	95.9%	80.0%	100.0%	70.6%	84.4%
Course Description or Overview	81.6%	88.6%	100.0%	91.2%	88.0%
Course Objectives and Grade-Level Theme	89.8%	77.1%	50.0%	97.1%	82.6%
Text(s) and Supplemental Materials	91.8%	90.0%	85.7%	94.1%	90.4%
Units of Study with Anticipated Dates of Completion	73.5%	60.0%	14.3%	52.9%	58.1%
Supplies	79.6%	85.7%	78.6%	67.6%	79.6%
Attendance Policy	75.5%	58.6%	28.6%	41.2%	57.5%
Academic Integrity (i.e., Plagiarism)	75.5%	67.1%	50.0%	8.8%	56.9%
APS Grading Scale	95.9%	98.6%	92.9%	79.4%	93.4%
“Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior.”	87.8%	68.6%	64.3%	76.5%	75.4%
Quarterly grades calculated through accumulation of summative and formative assessments	89.8%	91.4%	100.0%	88.2%	91.0%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher	69.4%	60.0%	85.7%	67.6%	66.5%
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade	57.1%	42.9%	42.9%	8.8%	40.7%

GRADE REPORTING PROCEDURE	AP/IB (TOTAL SYLLABI = 49)	REGULAR (TOTAL SYLLABI = 70)*	SPED (TOTAL SYLLABI = 14)	HILT/HILTEX (TOTAL SYLLABI = 34)	ALL COURSE TYPES (TOTAL SYLLABI = 167)
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades	61.2%	41.4%	50.0%	8.8%	41.9%
Final exam exemptions are permitted as specified	16.3%	17.1%	42.9%	0.0%	15.6%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters	42.9%	45.7%	35.7%	14.7%	38.3%
Explanation of grading policies for late work	93.9%	80.0%	71.4%	29.4%	72.5%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades	79.6%	91.4%	57.1%	79.4%	82.6%

Source: Arlington Public Schools and Hanover Research

\*Includes one syllabus that spans all four grade levels.

## CONCLUSIONS

A review of approximately 167 syllabi of Arlington Public Schools' nine high school programs reveals a moderate level of articulation of county grade reporting standards in course syllabi. In general, **grade reporting standards appear to be more frequently articulated in course syllabi than grade-level SOL standards.** Again, we note that an analysis based solely on the syllabi may not provide an accurate indicator of the articulation of goals across levels and between schools. An analysis of curricula, lesson plans, and assignments has the potential to be much more accurate.

Small but notable differences exist across schools, grade levels, and course types. The highest level of articulation of grade reporting standards was again found in grade 11 syllabi, while the lowest level of articulation of grade reporting standards was found in grade 9 syllabi. Again, we found that AP/IB and regular course syllabi were more likely to be aligned with grade reporting standards than HILT/HILTEX and SPED course syllabi. Notably, AP/IB course syllabi were also more likely to be aligned with grade reporting procedures than regular course syllabi, which reflects a change from the trend observed when examining APS syllabi for alignment with the Virginia SOLs.

## PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Hanover Research is committed to providing a work product that meets or exceeds member expectations. In keeping with that goal, we would like to hear your opinions regarding our reports. Feedback is critically important and serves as the strongest mechanism by which we tailor our research to your organization. When you have had a chance to evaluate this report, please take a moment to fill out the following questionnaire.

<http://www.hanoverresearch.com/evaluation/index.php>

## CAVEAT

The publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this brief. The publisher and authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this brief and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. There are no warranties which extend beyond the descriptions contained in this paragraph. No warranty may be created or extended by representatives of Hanover Research or its marketing materials. The accuracy and completeness of the information provided herein and the opinions stated herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce any particular results, and the advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every member. Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. Moreover, Hanover Research is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. Members requiring such services are advised to consult an appropriate professional.



1750 H Street NW, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20006

P 202.756.2971 F 866.808.6585  
[www.hanoverresearch.com](http://www.hanoverresearch.com)

# English Language Arts Student Interviews

---

Arlington Public Schools (APS) is committed to meeting the needs of students who are struggling to achieve the credits they need to graduate. Two areas that affect the level of success for this endeavor are 1) the degree to which the English Language Arts Program equitably meets the needs of all students and 2) the extent to which APS accurately recognizes and addresses the individual educational needs of struggling students.

To help determine ELA program effectiveness in these two areas, students themselves were asked to respond to a series of interview questions.

## Student Sample

Nineteen students were selected for the interview process based on grade level and ELA performance status. One student was classified as an 11<sup>th</sup> grader; 18 were classified as 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Ten of these 19 students had struggled academically in the past but were succeeding at the present time, and the other 9 were still struggling<sup>1</sup>.

For reporting purposes, students classified as “formerly struggling” will be referred to as FS students, while students classified as “still struggling” will be referred to as SS students.

### *QUESTION #1: What do you enjoy doing outside of school?*

Students from both the FS and SS groups identified playing sports as the thing they enjoyed doing most outside of school. Spending time with family and friends was the second most common response for both groups. Only one student from the FS group cited work/employment as an activity enjoyed outside the classroom compared to 5 work/employment-related responses from the SS group. It is not clear whether FS students enjoy work/employment less than SS students or whether more SS students have jobs than FS students.

### *QUESTION #2: In what ways do you feel your English classes (middle and high) relate to your life and/or the real world?*

The most common response from both the FS and SS groups was “reading” as a way that English classes helped students to better understand themselves and the world around them.

Writing and vocabulary were two additional areas identified by both the FS and SS groups as ways in which English classes helped students relate to the real world. FS students clarified this by stating that

---

<sup>1</sup> Students classified as “struggling” are either 12<sup>th</sup> graders who do not yet have the Reading/Writing verified credit necessary for graduation, students enrolled in classes below their age-appropriate grade level, or Special Education and/or limited English proficient students who are 22 years or older and enrolled in high school continuation.

writing assignments helped them with grammar, formatting essays, constructing resumes, and writing business letters. SS students clarified their responses by stating that writing assignments helped them with the completion of job applications, college applications, and essays.

Overall, most of the responses given by students in both focus groups centered on improved communications.

*QUESTION #3: When you look back on your middle and high school reading and English classes, what learning experiences had the most impact (positive and/or negative) on you? What are the most helpful things you learned or experienced in your reading and English classes? What was the least helpful?*

Writing assignments were cited by both the FS and SS focus groups as the learning experience that had the largest positive impact on students. Specific examples students experienced in reading and/or English classes included journal writing, narrative and argumentative essays, and responding to prompts.

Reading assignments were also cited by both groups as a positive learning experience. However, FS students also cited a number of specific reading activities that were not helpful. These unhelpful activities included reading about subjects they could not relate to, reading books that were “not good,” and rereading books that were assigned in a previous grade. Only one SS student stated that reading was an unhelpful activity when the assignment included a book that was too hard to understand.

Activities that were deemed “not helpful” by FS students appeared to be a matter of personal taste. For example, one FS student didn’t like to read, another didn’t like vocabulary work, and another didn’t like learning about colons and semicolons. Activities that were deemed “not helpful” by SS students appeared to be a matter of comprehension. For example, students stated that there were too many students in the class; that the teacher did not provide enough time to complete assignments; that the teacher did not explain assignments clearly; that students were unable to communicate appropriately with the teacher; and that the teacher was “nitpicky.”

*QUESTION #4: What opportunities to participate in extracurricular programs designed to support you academically did APS provide for you (e.g., mentor groups, George Mason’s Early Identification Program, or some other enrichment program)?*

The majority of students in the FS group stated that APS did not provide them with opportunities to participate in extracurricular programs aimed at academic support. The three students who did respond positively to the question noted tutoring services and afterschool support.

The majority of students in the SS group stated that APS did provide them with opportunities to participate in extracurricular programs aimed at academic support. They listed smaller classes, afterschool support, scheduled periods for teacher assistance, Saturday classes, and HILT classes as



some of the APS offerings. Two of these students said that though they were offered participation in outside programs, they did not take advantage of them.

*QUESTION #5: In middle and high school, have you taken any advanced, intensified, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes?*

Three of the ten FS students participated in AP classes, but only one of them completed the courses. The other two dropped out because it was a struggle to maintain good grades. The other seven FS students had not participated in any type of advanced classes for a variety of reasons: three students feared they would not be able to pass the course, two students were too busy with outside activities to participate, and one student simply “did not want to work that hard.”

Five of the nine SS students participated in advanced or intensified classes. It is not known whether they completed their courses or if they passed. The other four SS students stated that they had not participated in any type of advanced classes because they felt the classes would have been too much of a struggle.

*QUESTION #6: Did you take reading class in middle and/or high school?<sup>2</sup> If so, in what ways do you feel it improved your reading skills or helped prepare you for other coursework?*

The majority of students in both the FS and SS groups were enrolled in a 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, or 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading class. All FS participants, and all but one SS participant, said they felt that these classes helped improve their reading skills.

*QUESTION #7: The mission of the English language arts (ELA) program in Arlington is to provide you with literacy instruction that will enable you to be a strategic reader, an effective writer, an engaging speaker, and a critical thinker. In what ways do you feel the reading and English classes you've taken have given you the literacy skills you need to be successful?*

FS and SS students stated that the ELA program in Arlington had helped them become strategic readers by teaching them how to organize their thoughts, support their ideas, and take notes for review and testing purposes.

FS and SS students stated that the ELA program in Arlington had helped them become effective writers by helping to expand their vocabulary, think critically, defend their ideas, and improve their spelling. SS

---

<sup>2</sup>VA Standards of Learning (SOL) Reading assessments for 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders were required by the state for the first time in the 2005-06 school year. In 2005-06, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who participated in the interviews for this report were likely in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade and would have taken the new SOL Reading tests.

students also stated that the ELA program gave them the writing skills necessary to apply for a job or college admission.

FS and SS students stated that the ELA program in Arlington had helped them overcome shyness through participation in group discussions and the sharing of ideas. However, only three students identified activities geared toward promoting effective speaking. One student from the FS group stated that the ELA program provided information on how to effectively defend one's point of view. Two students from the SS group stated that the ELA program taught them how to make effective presentations. It should be noted that one FS student stated that information on how to be an effective speaker had not been provided by the ELA program in Arlington.

FS and SS students stated that the ELA program in Arlington had helped them become critical thinkers through the skills associated with reading and writing assignments.

*QUESTION #8: What interventions or programs have you participated in outside the school system to support academic success in your English classes (e.g., Sylvan Learning Center, SAT preparatory courses, or personal tutoring)? What did these programs/interventions provide that you did not receive in your English classes?*

One student from the FS group and two students from the SS group had taken advantage of an outside program to support ELA success. All three participated in some type of SAT prep course. Reportedly, these support courses provided students with more attention and time to prepare for the Scholastic Assessment Test.

*QUESTION #9: Please rank the following factors in terms of how important they have been to your success in reading and English classes: Quality of Instruction, Relationship with Teachers, Interest in the Content Area, and Support from Family Members or Other Outside Sources, with 1 being the highest.*

"Quality of Instruction" was ranked #1 or #2 by the majority of students in the FS group. Among SS students, "Relationship with Teachers" was most often ranked #1 or #2.

Students in both the FS and SS groups ranked "Support from Family Members or Other Outside Sources" as the least important factor to their success in reading and English.

*QUESTION #10: Is there anything else that helped you succeed in your reading and English classes and/or is there anything else you feel could have been done to help you excel in your reading and English classes?*

FS students listed a number of things that they felt helped them succeed in reading and English. These included the support and likability of teachers, consistent practice in writing and responding to reading questions, and making friends in class. SS students stated that their success in reading and English was a direct result of the support and encouragement they received from teachers.

FS students offered several practices that were not provided by reading and English teachers which could have helped them excel. For example, support with study skills, more review, SAT practice, and more one-on-one time with the teacher. One FS student shared that the classroom was not a comfortable place in which to ask questions.

SS students also offered several practices that could have helped them excel in reading and English. This included more vocabulary work, engaging activities, additional teacher support, test preparation help, and more group work. Several students also noted that they could have applied themselves more but were uncomfortable asking questions in class.