Using Literacy Centers in the Middle School ELA Classroom

ELA Core Plans

Teacher-Written Standards-Based Lesson Plans

Middle School Literacy Centers
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We hope you love it!

ELA Core Plans

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DO NOT PHOTOCOPY
(Except for your own classroom)

DO NOT POST ONLINE.

Effective literacy centers in the middle school classroom allow students to collaborate and learn in a fun, meaningful, and engaging way.

There are lots of ways to organize centers in your classroom. You can pick a spot in your room for each center, or make your centers mobile by placing the needed supplies in a folder, bag, plastic box, or basket. You can use centers at times when you need to work with groups or individuals, such as during guided reading. Or, you can simply choose a day of the week,(Fun Fridays) and let students rotate through the centers during that class period. Centers are also perfect for early finish work as well!

This resource contains ten different literacy centers. The amount of time your students spend in each center depends on the amount of time you have in your schedule for centers. You could have students visit one a day, two a day, one a week, one a month, etc. It's all up to you!

Things you will need to think about
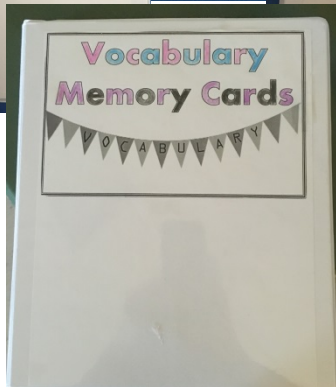- What will students do with the work they complete at the center? Some teachers require their students to keep a notebook for their center work which is graded periodically. Others have a basket or area where students turn in their work. You may also choose to display students' work in your room. **We have our students keep a "Literacy Center Portfolio"**. We are providing the checklists that allow us to easily grade these portfolios.
- How will you implement centers in your classroom? Will they strictly be for early finishers so that students can earn extra credit? Will you use them when you need to meet with small groups? Or, will you use them one day a week or one day a month as a way for students to work collaboratively and learn through hands on activities?
- What kind of rotation will you use? Who will work together? How long will each group spend at each station?
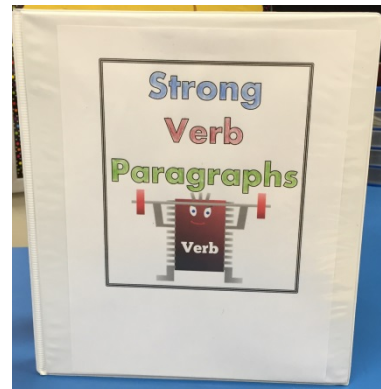- What will you do if students finish at a center before you are ready to rotate? If students have their own independent reading books, this can be the requirement for early finishers. If not, you may want to place several short picture books at each center for students to read if they finish center work before others, or provide crossword puzzles or word search sheets.

Argue Your Point!

Quote Analysis
To be or not to be... That is the question.

Strong Verb Paragraphs
Verb

Extreme Makeover Writing Edition
Writing

Fun With Fables

Poetry Fun
Poetry

Vocabulary Memory Cards
VOCABULARY

Would You Rather???
Would you rather have a kangaroo or a koala bear as a pet?

Creative Story Ideas
My Stories

Informational Text Time

Fun With Fable
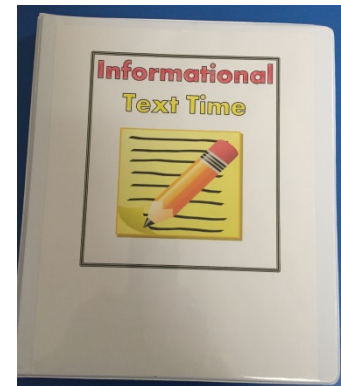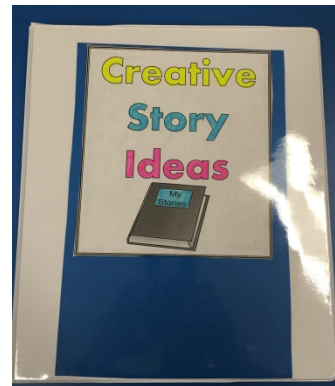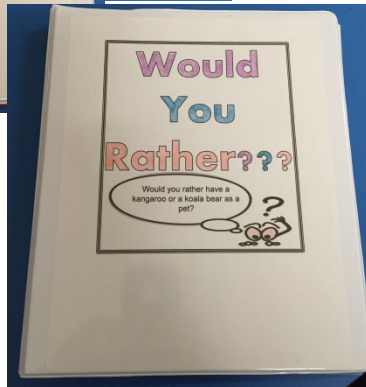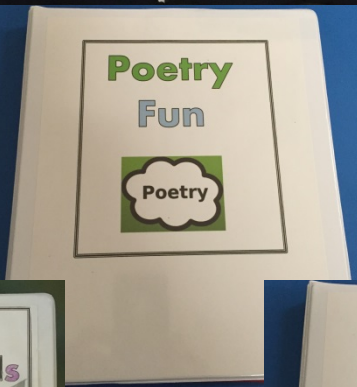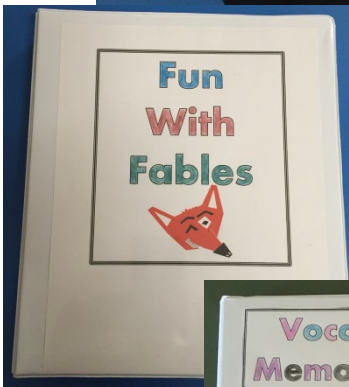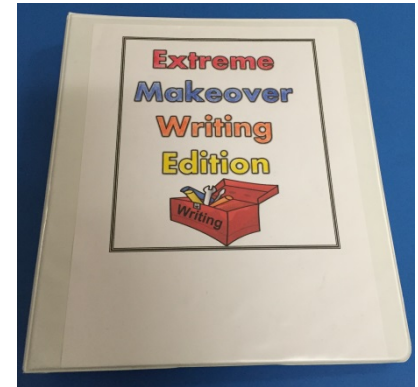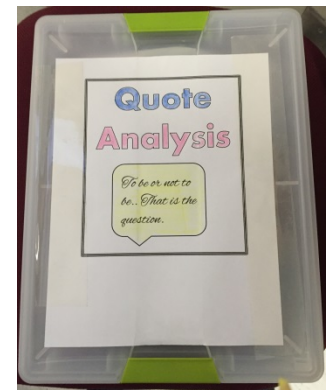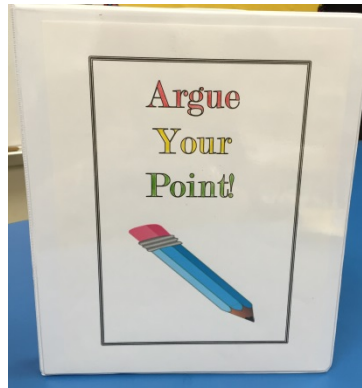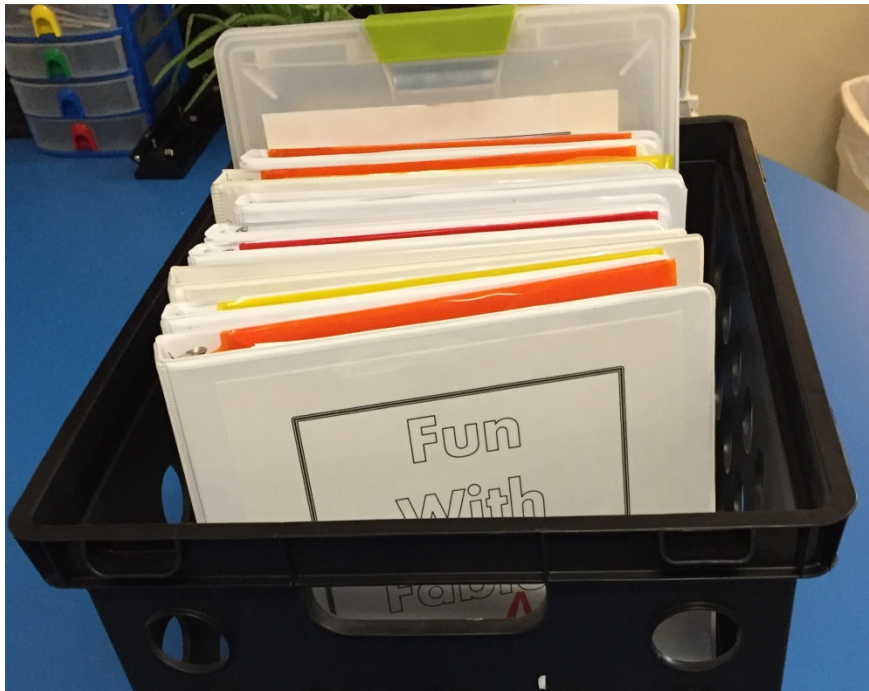
Lessons Before Starting

For the literacy centers to run smoothly, students need to know exactly what to do. It will not be fun for the students or the teacher if students are in the centers and do not understand the task. Each center has clear directions, and students should be able to get straight to work. It is important, though, that before sending students to work in the centers for the first time, you give brief directions for each one. Also, the following center activities will need to be "taught" beforehand so that everyone knows what to do.

- Strong verb paragraph – While there is a sample strong verb paragraph for the center, it is strongly recommended that you first write one together as a class. Make sure students understand that they cannot use any helping verbs except in the first and last sentence. Also, make sure they can identify verbs in sentences and underline them.

- Vocabulary Memory Cards – The directions for this center are clear; however, you may want to demonstrate how to complete the activities in this center. Show the students one of the cards . Explain how the card contains a mnemonic device to help them remember the word. Then, choose a word as a class that you can create a card for. Together, come up with an "Imagine" statement and a "Think of". Then, complete the card with a picture. Explain to students that this is what they will do when in this center.

Literacy Center Rules

- Be on task at all times. While in the center, only work on the work in the center.

- Follow the directions for each task.

- Do not talk to students in other centers.

- Work quietly with others at the center. (voice level 1)

- Before asking for help, read all directions and check the frequently asked questions page at the center. ☺

Simple Literacy Center Rotation Sample

Teacher	Argue Your Point	Creative Story Ideas	Extreme Makeover	Fun with Fables	Informational Text	Poetry Fun	Quote Analysis	Strong Verb Paragraphs	Vocabulary Memory	Would You Rather
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

When rotating, each station moves one spot to the right. Example: Group 1 will go to "Argue Your Point". Group 2 will move to "Creative Story Ideas" . Group 11 will move to "Teacher".   In the teacher center, the teacher can work with a small group on some skill, guided reading, writing conferences, etc. Of course, if you do not need to work with small groups, simply eliminate the "teacher" rotation.

Work Completion Checklist for Center

Student	Date	What did you complete?	Rate your final product from an *A* to *a F.*

Have students create a Literacy *Center Portfolio*!

One easy way to make sure students are completing their work at centers is to have them create a "Center Portfolio". Each student will need a three prong folder. Page protectors are optional. Each time a student completes an activity in a center, he/she will place the completed work in the portfolio. Once students have had time to visit each center, portfolios can be graded. Or, you can grade them once a month, nine weeks, or semester. It's all up to you and how often you use these centers. These can also be graded for extra credit! This will work perfect if you will be using these centers for early finish work. When a student has extra time in class, he/she can go get a center, complete the activity at his/her desk, and place the activity in his/her portfolio. Once an activity has been completed at all ten centers, the portfolio can be turned in for an extra credit grade.

If you will be using portfolios, go ahead and give each student a folder before starting the centers. This will help students understand that after being at each center, they should have some "product" that will be placed in the folder. So if two students are working together at the poetry center, each student will need a poem to go in his/her folder. They cannot simply write one and put both of their names on it.

Check out our checklists to help you quickly grade these portfolios. The first one included is a checklist for students to keep at the front of their folders. They can check off a box each time a center is complete. ☺ The checklists that follow are for the teacher to use when grading the portfolios.

Name: _____

Directions: Place a checkmark in the box for each center you complete. You must complete a column of ten before moving to the next column.

Center									
Poetry Fun									
Quote Analysis									
Argue Your Point									
Strong Verb Paragraphs									
Creative Story Ideas									
Fun with Fables									
Informational Text Time									
Extreme Makeover Writing									
Would You Rather									
Vocabulary Memory Cards									

How to Use the Grading Charts

- The chart on the next page is what we use to grade our literacy center portfolios. Once a student has a completed work sample from all ten stations, he/she turns in the portfolio for a grade.

- Under each center category, we put a check if the criteria is met. We put an X if the criteria is not met. Each X is three points off the total portfolio grade.

- We are also including other grading charts that are individualized to each center. You must decide which is best for you and your students. ☺

Quote #	Quote is fully explained.	Illustration matches quote.	Illustration is neat and colorful.	Sample # Extreme Makeover	Story or essay is noticeably revised.	Word choice is improved.	New piece of writing is more enjoyable to read.
Type of poem	Poem follows directions.	It looks like a poem.	Poem is neat and illustrated.	Title of Fable	Correctly defined words moral /analysis	Comic Strip depicts fable. Moral is clear	Comic strip is neat and colorful.
Title of informational article	Main idea is a complete sentence & correct.	Three facts from article are written.	Question for further research is complete.	Word Vocabulary Memory	Vocabulary word analysis is complete and correct.	New card contains definition and mnemonic.	New card is illustrated, neat, and colorful.
Character or setting (Creative Writing)	Details about how character or setting looks are included.	Paragraph is interesting and descriptive.	Mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are minimal.	Prompt number Strong verb paragraph	Paragraph contains 7 sentences.	No helping verbs used except in 1st and last paragraphs.	Verbs are underlined.
Prompt # Argue Your Point	Each part of prompt is fully answered.	Paragraphs or ideas are relevant to prompt.	Paragraph or ideas are interesting and argumentative.	Prompt Would you rather	Brainstorm Circle map is complete.	Facts and/or personal experience is complete.	Paragraph contains topic sentence and details.

Quote Analysis Center Checklist

Name_____

Quote #	Quote is fully explained.	Illustration matches quote.	Illustration is neat and colorful.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Poetry Fun Center Checklist

Name_____

Type of Poem	Poem follows directions.	It looks like a poem.	Poem is neat and illustrated.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Informational Text Time Center Checklist

Name_____

Title of Article	Main idea is a complete sentence & correct	Three facts from article are written.	Question for further research is complete.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is ____points off the total portfolio grade.

Extreme Makeover Writing Edition Center Checklist

Name_____

Sample #	Story or essay is noticeably revised.	Word choice is improved.	Overall, new piece of writing is more enjoyable to read.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is ____points off the total portfolio grade.

Creative Story Ideas Center Checklist

Name_____

Character or setting	Details about how character or setting looks are included.	Paragraph is interesting and descriptive.	Mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are minimal.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Argue Your Point Center Checklist

Name_____

Prompt #	Each part of prompt is fully answered.	Paragraphs or ideas are relevant to prompt.	Paragraph or ideas are interesting and argumentative.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Fun With Fables Center Checklist

Name_____

Title of Fable	Index card has correctly defined words and moral or analysis of moral.	Comic Strip depicts the fable. The moral is made clear.	Comic strip is neat and colorful.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Vocabulary Memory Center Checklist

Name_____

Word	Vocabulary word analysis sheet is complete and correct.	New vocabulary card contains definition and mnemonic.	New vocabulary card is illustrated, neat, and colorful.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Strong Verb Paragraph Center Checklist

Name_____

Prompt number	Paragraph contains 7 sentences.	No helping verbs used except in 1st and last paragraphs.	Verbs are underlined.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.

Would You Rather Center Checklist

Name_____

Prompt	Brainstorm Circle map is complete.	Facts and/or personal experience is complete.	Paragraph contains topic sentence and details.

Put a check if criteria is met. Put an X if criteria is not met. Each X is _____points off the total portfolio grade.