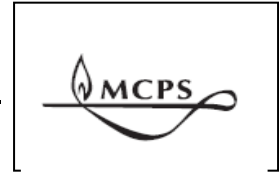


Ashburton Elementary School

6314 Lone Oak Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817



August 2020

Dear Ashburton Elementary Families,

Welcome to the start of the new school year!

This year, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) will complete the roll out of the Benchmark Advance and Benchmark Adelante English and Spanish Reading/Language Arts programs from Benchmark Education Company at all elementary schools. It is a comprehensive Reading/Language Arts program for Kindergarten through fifth grade, built specifically to meet the demands of today's standards.

These programs address key shifts in curriculum and instruction to meet the demands of the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards. These standards require students to engage with more rigorous, complex text as well as dive deeper into the interpretation of the text. This led MCPS to look for and implement a more engaging, interactive, and modern program.

So...what's different about Benchmark Advance?

The biggest difference: the reading textbook.

The core student books are light and manageable, magazine-like texts. These books are designed for students to interact with the readings by writing on the page and annotating the text.

Wait...does this mean that my student can write in his/her books?

Yes! Not only are students allowed to write in their books, but they should be writing in them! Annotation encourages students to take ownership of the text and dive deeper into the content, which improves comprehension. Each book is meant to be used for a single unit of instruction. Your student's annotations will allow you to see exactly how they are interpreting and engaging with the readings.

As your student is working through each unit, you'll notice that all of the readings are centered on one topic. These topics include social studies and science content as well as literary subjects such as point of view, theme, and character. At the start of each unit, you'll receive a school-to-home letter that will provide additional activities you can do at home with your student. These activities connect to the unit topic as well as the vocabulary, comprehension, and phonics/word study skills being taught during the unit.

Students will continue to receive small group instruction to support them with the grade level texts, as well as read texts on their instructional reading levels. Writing

instruction will include lessons that support process writing and writing in response to reading. Students will regularly engage in word study, including phonics, spelling, and vocabulary through reading and writing.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any questions, please contact your child's teacher or Ms. Elaraj, Reading Specialist, at [Anita M Elaraj@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Anita_M_Elaraj@mcpsmd.org). We look forward to using *Benchmark Advance* and working with you to ensure a successful school year!