

August 2015

Dear Family,

**Welcome to SpringBoard English Language Arts** ***Grade 10, Unit 1: Cultural Conversations.***

**Overview**

In this unit,students explore the ideas of culture and community. Two **essential questions** focus their attention on the *skills* and *knowledge* presented and assessed in the unit:

* *How do cultural experiences shape, impact, or influence our identity and perceptions?*
* *How do we synthesize multiple sources of information into a cohesive argument?*

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

**Assessments**

Two *performance-based tasks*, called **Embedded Assessments**, give students an opportunity to demonstrate their new learning in the skills of *exposition* and *argumentation*. Specifically,

* **Embedded Assessment 1** asks students to write an essay *explaining* their cultural identity. Since this is an honors course, this assessment will be adjusted for our class.
* **Embedded Assessment 2** asks students to *argue* the importance of culture in one’s life.

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

**Developing Skills and Knowledge for the Assessments**

Throughout the unit, students engage in activities in which they use **strategies** such as *questioning the text* and *SOAPSTone* to practice the important **skills** of *close reading*, *speaking and listening*, and *writing in response to texts*. Students analyze and discuss a variety of texts such as an excerpt from the novel *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan and the essay “An Indian Father’s Plea” by Robert Lake. Throughout the unit, discussion is promoted as a way to encourage lively debate about ideas.

Students’ **vocabulary study** concentrates on **academic vocabulary** of argumentation and exposition, such as *perspective*, *claim*, and *counterclaim*, and **vocabulary specific to literary study** such as *figurative language* and *syntax*.

**Helping Your Child**

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Carol Johnson