

THE TOWN SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM SUMMARY

SCHOOL-WIDE GOALS:

- TO INSTILL AN APPRECIATION OF THE WRITTEN AND SPOKEN WORD.
- TO VALUE THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AS ACCESS TO IDEAS AND CULTURES.
- TO DEVELOP FACILITY IN READING AND WRITING, INCLUDING SPELLING AND GRAMMAR.

NURSERY/KINDERGARTEN: The emphasis in the Nursery/Kindergarten years is on developing spoken language and fluency of expression, listening skills and those physical and cognitive abilities fundamental to reading and writing.

Nursery 3: The aim is to help young children discover the uses and value of language and to foster a love of language.

- ❖ Build vocabulary, facilitate conversation, lead discussions, and model correct, clear language.
- ❖ Encourage the use of writing tools (crayons, markers, paint brushes) to develop eye-hand coordination and fine motor control.
- ❖ Create the stimulus for language exploration by presentation of interesting, diverse materials.
- ❖ Provide play situations to support social aspects of language development.

Nursery 4: The classroom becomes an environment rich in print so children begin to see the relationship of symbols to the spoken word. The children participate in a library program that involves weekly story readings and signing out of individual books.

- ❖ Introduction of print into the environment (charts, signs, and labels).
- ❖ Group meetings and discussions for listening and self expression opportunities.
- ❖ Individual story dictation and collective group writing (experience charts, recipes, graphs).
- ❖ Early writing activities.
- ❖ Refining of motor skills and left to right sequencing.
- ❖ Expansion and enrichment of language (sentence structure, use of adjectives, adverbs, rhyming words).

Kindergarten: Language arts skills are taught within the framework of the daily curriculum and small group work. Based on a balanced literacy approach, the language arts curriculum incorporates opportunities for shared reading, independent reading workshop, writing and word study. The identification and writing of letters, letter/sound associations, word recognition, and reflection of story events and author's messages are addressed in meaningful activities rather than in isolation. Classroom teachers regularly meet with the Reading Specialist to design reading and writing activities and monitor children's progress. Children continue to have weekly library time and borrow a book of their choice from the library collection. Selected computer software for skills reinforcement is available.

- ❖ Increased use of environmental print and books, including Big Books, charts, poems, songs, rhymes and riddles.
- ❖ Read-alouds and story dictations to build on sequencing skills, predictive abilities, connections to character and plot.
- ❖ Practice of writing, labeling work, formation of letters, developmental spelling on drawings, and journal entries.
- ❖ Daily meetings and directed group discussions to strengthen ability to follow a topic and respond, problem-solve, plan, and gain understanding of other viewpoints.
- ❖ Monitoring of individual skill development through periodic assessments with Reading Specialist and classroom teachers including an end-of-year assessment.

LOWER SCHOOL: The primary objectives of the reading program are to encourage enjoyment and involvement in reading and to help children develop into independent and critical readers. Since all children do not learn to read in the same way, a variety of instructional methods and materials are used. In **Reading Workshop**, a whole class lesson introduces skills. The children then read books on their individual reading levels with support from the classroom teachers or reading specialist. In **Response to Literature**, students share a common piece of literature, paying particular attention to discussion and comprehension skills. The **Writing Program** emphasizes the process of writing and builds upon the child's own abilities as a storyteller. Students spend much time developing and refining stories prior to "publication". Daily reading and writing activities are integrated within this literature-based reading program based upon developmentally appropriate skills, including a defined phonetic sequence. Reading specialists work regularly with students during language arts periods, as well as meeting weekly with classroom teachers to develop the curriculum.

First Grade:

- ❖ Literature-based program using a variety of materials including Big Books, trade books, and poems.
- ❖ Teaching of consonant sounds with vowels to read and spell phonetically regular words. The spelling of non-phonetic words is introduced.
- ❖ Writing and sharing of stories based on personal experiences. Learning of lower case manuscript.
- ❖ Daily journal writing and weekly dictation.

Second Grade:

- ❖ Increased emphasis on reading comprehension.
- ❖ Expanding of sight vocabulary and phonetic rules.
- ❖ Weekly spelling tests.
- ❖ Writing emphasizing revision techniques and story development. Experimentation with different genres, such as poetry and folktales.
- ❖ Journal writing across curriculum.

Third Grade:

- ❖ Increasing reading fluency, understanding plot and character development, and analyzing literature.
- ❖ Group reading integrated with Social Studies themes.
- ❖ Experimenting with different types of writing such as realistic fiction, poetry, personal narratives and expository writing.
- ❖ Cursive writing and keyboarding skills are introduced.
- ❖ Journal writing across curriculum.

Fourth Grade:

- ❖ Exploration of different genres of literature, such as memoirs, fiction, non-fiction and poetry.
- ❖ Reading, writing and research are often integrated with Social Studies.
- ❖ Continued analysis of plot, character, and literary techniques.

UPPER SCHOOL: Upper School English is a comprehensive program combining literary analysis, creative and expository writing, and the study of vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Classes meet daily. The library and the computer lab are used by large and small groups for instruction and reference work as needed. Whenever appropriate, literature is selected because of relevancy to the Social Studies curriculum.

Fifth and Sixth Grades: Curriculum identifies and addresses four critical and interrelated experiences: Response to Literature, Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, and the study of Language Patterns.

- ❖ **Response to Literature** is a reading program involving students in the same piece of literature. Oral and written activities maximize involvement. They include character analysis, story mapping, class discussions, dramatic presentations, and written responses (both creative and expository). Some responses are also in the form of blog entries. The books we may choose to study as a class are the following: *Beowulf: A New Telling*, *Little Sister*, *The Giver*, *The Watsons Go To Birmingham*, *The View From Saturday*, *Love That Dog*, *Getting Near To Baby*, and selected works of short fiction.
- ❖ **Reading Workshop** involves children in reading and responding to books on their own individual reading levels. In addition to the library, classroom libraries have been developed to offer the students a wide variety of children's literature.
- ❖ **Writing Workshop/Skills** takes place regularly. Teacher and peer conferencing guide the writer through a process which includes topic selection, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- ❖ **Investigating Language Patterns** focuses upon the structure of the language: phonetic elements, spelling patterns, grammatical structures, and vocabulary development. Classical roots are taught in the context of read literature. Supplemental text: *Writers Express Handbook*.
- ❖ **Instruction** is given in standardized tests, and emphasis is placed on test taking strategies. Following directions, analogies, and reading comprehension skills are reviewed in preparation for students' Educational Records Bureau Comprehensive Testing Program.

Seventh and Eighth Grade: Curriculum focuses primarily on literary analysis and development of expository and creative writing skills. In addition to the study of specific works of literature in class, students read and respond to independent books selected with assistance from their teachers.

- ❖ **Literary Analysis** consists of class discussions, reading comprehension assessments, book responses, journal and blog entries, personal essays and related projects (drawings, scenes, oral presentations) which explore character development, conflict, symbolism, writer's craft, point of view, narrative voice, and theme in books assigned for class and individual reading. The books we may choose to study as a class are among the following: (Seventh Grade) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Othello*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, *Flowers for Algernon*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*; (Eighth Grade) *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lord of the Flies*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *A House on Mango Street*, *The Chosen*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Night, 1984* and selected short stories.
- ❖ **Writing Skills** are developed through vocabulary acquisition; grammar, punctuation and syntax study; and formal and informal essay assignments. Initial drafts are rewritten to teach editing for the strongest possible final form of presentation. Several book responses per year are required (two oral), and short writing assignments are given on a consistent basis. Texts used include *Vocabulary Workshop* and *Painless Grammar*.
- ❖ **Supplementary Instruction** includes films of works studied (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Lord of the Flies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Othello*).

