

## Language Arts

My goal in the Language Arts program is to help the students attain the skills they need to write clearly for a variety of purposes. Students will develop their ability to express thoughts with clarity and organization. The three major modes of writing we will focus on are narrative, persuasive, and expository. We will do a variety of writing pieces within each mode throughout the year.

### The Modes of Writing

#### Narrative

Writing that tells a story or tells about a personal experience and includes characters, a setting, and a plot. Some examples include short stories, diaries, vignettes, and biographical pieces.

#### Expository

Writing that is meant to inform, explain, clarify, or define so the reader learns something new. Some examples include reports, newspaper articles, resumes, and directions. We will specifically work on report writing skills in conjunction with a theme from their social studies curriculum.

#### Persuasive

Writing that uses logic, language, and evidence to influence the reader. Some examples include advertisements, editorials, debates, and essays.

### Content, Organization, and Style (COS)

This portion of the grade arises from the six traits of writing. The traits are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Different writing pieces will focus on one or more of the six traits for grading purposes.

### Grammar & Conventions (CON)

People communicate differently depending on their audience. One will talk less formally to a peer than to a boss. It is my job to ensure that students know, understand, and can use the formal rules of the English language. Each student will have a Skills Book that will be used to practice isolated skills. As rules of grammar are introduced and used, correct grammatical use of language will be expected in students' writing pieces. Each writing piece receives a score for the six traits (COS) and for conventions (CON).

### Grading Policy

*“Skill to do comes of doing.” Ralph Waldo Emerson*

It is my experience that student writing improves through continual practice and revision. To this end, students are encouraged to edit, revise, and re-submit any writing assignment as they work toward a grade with which they are satisfied. Students receive specific feedback on each writing piece with ideas for improvement. Students are encouraged to use before and after school, and no recess hall times to seek out further support from me to improve their writing. Students will receive adequate time to re-work and re-submit writing pieces.

The three categories that comprise the Language Arts grade are:

- COS/Six Trait = 50%
- CON = 30%
- Grammar = 20%

The grading scale is a continuum that mimics the grading scale for the 7th grade writing WASL categories:

<b>COS=Content, Organization, Style</b>	<b>CON=Conventions &amp; Grammar</b>
COS 4+ 100% Exceeds Standard	CON 2+ 100% Exceeds Standard
COS 4 96% Exceeds Standard	CON 2 94% Exceeds Standard
COS 4- 94% Exceeds Standard	CON 2- 88% Meets Standard
COS 3+ 92% Meets Standard	CON 1+ 83% Approaching Standard
COS 3 88% Meets Standard	CON 1 78% Approaching Standard
COS 3- 84% Meets Standard	CON 1- 73% Below Standard
COS 2+ 82% Approaching Standard	
COS 2 78% Approaching Standard	
COS 2- 74% Approaching Standard	
COS 1+ 72% Below Standard	
COS 1 68% Below Standard	
COS 1- 65% Below Standard	

# Literature

My goal for the Literature program is to teach students the skills they need to think critically about what they read, sharing ideas and opinions articulately. Many readers struggle with actively thinking while they read and lack the strategies necessary to recognize and repair when comprehension breaks down. Students will develop their ability to use evidence from the text when analyzing literature, communicating ideas both in conversation and in writing. Research demonstrates that a student’s ability to improve reading is greatly enhanced by reading books at their fluency level and developing stamina for reading over time. For this reason, there is a strong emphasis on independent reading in 6th grade literature.

## Spelling & Vocabulary Acquisition

Students will continue word studies at their appropriate developmental level, studying spelling patterns and progressing through word lists weekly. We will continue to use the program “Words Their Way.” A separate letter outlining the routines will be handed out at the end of September when formal assessment has concluded and students have been grouped at the appropriate instructional levels.

## Reading Comprehension Skills

This part of the literature program focuses on the thinking skills of competent readers as well as the strategies successful readers employ when approaching a piece of reading (pre-reading, predicting, visualizing, confirming, re-reading, etc.). Within this category, students practice responding to literature (drawing conclusions, inferring, using details from text to support their thinking, etc.) during group instruction and independent reading. Reading response journals (RRJs) are the primary assignment in this category. Students will also have the opportunity to self-select from among several choices within one genre when we begin small group literature circle groups later in the school year.

The grading scale for written reading response journals (RRJ) is similar to the grading scale used on the WASL Reading short-answer portion of the test.

4+ 100% Exceeds Standard	3 88% Meets Standard	2- 73% Approaching Standard
4 96% Exceeds Standard	3- 83% Meets Standard	1+ 72% Below Standard
4- 93% Exceeds Standard	2+ 82% Approaching Standard	1 68% Below Standard
3+ 92% Meets Standard	2 78% Approaching Standard	1- 65% Below Standard

## Independent Reading

Research shows that the greatest improvement in a student's ability to read is done by simply reading. For this reason, independent reading is a part of each student's literature grade. A student's independent reading score will be determined by the following factors.

- **Accelerated Reading (AR) Goal:** Each trimester students will choose a point goal that they will attempt to meet. I do not want to limit students to books solely on the AR list. If a student chooses to read a book not on the list, they may create a test for that book to receive AR points toward their goal. Students and parents will sign a contract indicating the student's goal, deadline for submitting tests and taking tests, and a plan of how to go about obtaining this goal. Each student is required to set a minimum goal of 15 points for the first trimester, and 20 points for each subsequent trimester.

*Remember what you read.*

- **Reading Partners:** To support our growth as readers, students will have a buddy with whom they will share reading goals, ideas, and strategies. Just like exercise buddies help motivate us and keep us on track with our fitness goals, reading partners support one another with the important work we do in our reading lives.

*Share what you read.*

- **Weekly Reading Log:** In order for students to improve their reading and build their reading stamina, students read for extended periods of time. Not only does this aide in comprehension, but studies show that students build fluency and stamina by moving through books in a timely pace. To this end, students will complete and submit a reading log every Friday. This log will travel between home and school daily. Students will record title, book level, minutes read, and pages read. Students will be given 20 - 25 minutes in class each day to read. Ideally, this is followed by a minimum of 20 minutes at home each night. **To receive 100% on this weekly assignment, students must read a minimum of 280 minutes between school and home each week.** This reading log can be downloaded weekly from my website.

*Read every day.*

## Grading Policy

The Literature grade is comprised of three categories:

- Vocabulary Acquisition 10%
- Independent Reading 45%
- Reading Comprehension 45%

The scale for reading response journals (4+ through 1-) is used for all written assignments in literature. The same philosophy of "learning through doing" applies to written literature assignments as well; students are encouraged to re-write these assignments until they achieve the grade with which they are satisfied.