

# LANGUAGE ARTS

## Kindergarten

Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the main components of the language arts program at MJDS. Through a literature based program children learn phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills needed to be successful learners. Activities are integrated in many areas of the curriculum. For example, students will journal about their scientific observations and explain math strategies orally and in writing. Although inventive spelling is acceptable in the earlier grades, children learn conventional spelling and writing mechanics so they have the skills necessary to move through the writing process. They learn about first drafts, editing, and revision to produce a final copy of which they can be proud. Creative writing, poetry, drama, computer skills, and research skills enhance our rich language arts program.

What is unique about Kindergarten's approach to language arts?

Our students develop the beginning skills and strategies to become readers and writers. Their phonemic awareness increases as they develop manipulate sounds into their own inventive spelling, becoming authors of their own stories.

### Units of Study – Key Content – Essential Questions

### Concepts, Understandings, and Skills

KINDERGARTEN	
<p><b>Speaking and Listening</b>            Group discussions and activities            Sharing and class presentations            Role playing            Social interaction and conflict resolution            Story times            All school assemblies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can I gain knowledge from listening to my teacher and classmates and use what I learn to achieve my goals?</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading</b>            Letter of the week            Word games and activities            Word families</p>	<p>Speaking and Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays a proper attention span during large group activities</li> <li>Follows simple and multi-step oral directions</li> <li>Listens respectfully to a story</li> <li>Speaks confidently in front of a group</li> <li>Participates in classroom discussions and activities</li> </ul> <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handles a book appropriately</li> <li>Recalls ideas, characters, events, and facts from a story or discussion</li> </ul>

Reading messages on the morning chart  
Reading poems, songs, tongue twisters, and riddles from sentence strips and charts

Reading "Let's Find Out"

Reading buddy projects and activities

Independent, partner and small- group reading

Genre and author studies

Using non-fiction books to gain knowledge about a country

- What are letters and what sounds do they make? What information must I learn about books before I can read them?

### **Writing**

Watching teacher model writing on board or charts

Practicing D'Nealian letter formation on handwriting sheets

Copying words onto work

Practicing sounding out words to write daily work

Creating books

Capitalization and punctuation

Writing a research report about a country with the assistance of reading buddies

- How can we clearly communicate our thoughts, feelings, and ideas on paper?

- Understands the correlation between pictures and words
- Identifies letter names
- Recognizes letter sounds
- Follows printed words from left to right, top to bottom
- Recognizes high frequency words
- Recognizes initial letters as clues to words
- Sequences activities
- Will develop phonemic awareness
- Will learn parts of a book
- Will understand and communicate characters, setting, problems and solutions about stories
- Will know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books
- Will identify the job of an author and illustrator
- Will develop strategies to decode words

### **Writing**

- Draws pictures to convey meaning
- Dictates words, phrases, sentences, and stories
- Understands the connection between spoken words and written language
- Grasps a writing tool comfortably
- Uses sounds for inventive spelling
- Writes first and last name using uppercase and lowercase letters
- Writes a sentence starting with a capital letter
- Uses proper spacing between words
- Employs proper punctuation at the end of a sentence
- Writes letters using D'Nealian
- Will write from top to bottom, left to right

# LANGUAGE ARTS

## Grades 1-2

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What is unique about 1-2's approach to language arts?

Students study and explore multiple genres and thus learn to evaluate literature. The students are exposed to their first research experience which builds over their years at the Day School. First and second graders develop basic writing skills including capitalization, punctuation, simple sentence structure, and work on moving away from inventive spelling.

### Units of Study- Key Content-Essential Questions

### Concepts, Understandings, Skills

#### GRADES 1-2

#### Author studies may include:

Eric Carle  
Jan Brett  
Leo Lionni  
Dr. Seuss

- What is each author's style? What genre(s) does each write in? How do their stories relate to our curriculum? Why is this author significant in children's literature?

#### Genre studies may include:

Poetry  
Fables  
Non-fiction  
Fantasy  
Adventure

#### Speaking and Listening

- Listen during a presentation
- Participate in group discussions
- Retell a story or summarize an activity
- Share information about an object while in front of the class
- Respond to others by asking questions
- Recognize and respond to nonverbal communication
- Demonstrate comfort when speaking before a group

#### Reading

- Uses decoding strategies including; letter-sound relationships, word families, context clues, and picture clues

<p>Fairy tales Biographies Tall Tales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the characteristics of each genre? What well know children’s stories are in each genre?</li> </ul> <p><b>Reader’s Theater</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does reading aloud convey the nuances of dialogue?</li> </ul> <p><b>Journaling activities may include:</b> Dialogue journals Reflections on literature, experiences, or field trips Math, science, and social studies experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the traits of a competent writer?</li> </ul> <p><b>Research and writing may include:</b> Autobiographies Animal reports Biographies Fictional stories</p> <p><b>Research and writing skills may include:</b> Fact finding Note taking Paragraph writing Topic sentences Sequencing Writing process including editing and published final drafts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the research process?</li> </ul> <p><b>Literature circles skills include:</b> Analyzing Evaluating Inferring Synthesizing Predicting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the primary elements of comprehension?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read a selection aloud with fluency and expression after practicing</li> <li>• Describes setting, characters, problem and solution of a piece of literature</li> <li>• Describes characteristics of various genres</li> <li>• Responds to literature using basic competencies (knowledge, comprehension, and application)</li> <li>• Responds to literature using higher level thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)</li> <li>• Respond personally to literature</li> <li>• Read grade-appropriate materials</li> <li>• Choose and read books of personal interest using decoding strategies</li> <li>• Locate and use various types of materials in the media center</li> </ul> <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write legibly in D’Nealian</li> <li>• Begin to use the writing process</li> <li>• Write about a personal experience</li> <li>• Write a note or letter to a friend, parent, teacher, author</li> <li>• Revise work using a checklist and peer assistance</li> <li>• Use resources to move from the use of inventive spelling to conventional spelling when revising and editing</li> <li>• Application of alphabetizing skills</li> <li>• Use of capitalization and punctuation including: end marks, commas, apostrophes, and quotation marks.</li> </ul>
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# LANGUAGE ARTS

## Grade 3

Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the main components of the language arts program. Through a literature based program children learn phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills needed to be successful learners. Activities are integrated in many areas of the curriculum. For example, students will journal about their scientific observations and explain math strategies orally and in writing. Although inventive spelling is acceptable in the earlier grades, children learn conventional spelling and writing mechanics so they have the skills necessary to move through the writing process. They learn about first drafts, editing, and revision to produce a final copy of which they can be proud. Creative writing, poetry, drama, computer skills, and research skills enhance our rich language arts program.

What is unique about Grade 3's approach to language arts?  
 There is an emphasis on learning from new and more complex literary genres, with focus on a deeper understanding of literature, which leads to expanding students reading and writing skills. This truly develops life-long, independent readers. Early experiences with poetry give students the opportunity to explore an alternative written voice.

Units of Study – Key Content- Essential Questions	Concepts, Understandings, Skills
GRADE 3 <b>Reading:</b> <i>“Back To School”:</i> Fiction, poetry, guided reading, writing about personal experiences and written reflections <i>Jewish Book Month:</i> Fiction and non-fiction, biographies, short stories, traditional literature Book reports/projects, posters for display <i>Diversity:</i> Exchange with Catholic school; Christmas and <u>Hanukkah</u> literature Written student autobiographies <i>Weather:</i>	<b>Speaking/Listening:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen actively during a presentation</li> <li>• Participate in group discussions and activities</li> <li>• Retell a story</li> <li>• Ask questions to clarify understanding</li> <li>• Use increasingly descriptive vocabulary</li> <li>• Speak to an audience with confidence</li> <li>• Participate in presentations</li> </ul> <b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read a selection aloud with fluency and</li> </ul>

<p>Literature in which weather impacts many elements of the story; chapter books  Literature logs  Integration with science study of weather  <i>Humor:</i>  Introduction to literature circles  Several authors  Oral presentations, skits, culminating activity each “circle” presents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does exposure to different genres help third grade students become life-long readers?</li> </ul> <p><b>Writing Process:</b>  <i>Daily Oral Language:</i>  Teach editing skills (self, peer, teacher)  Computer skills taught and implemented (typing and basic computer knowledge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does exposure to DOL help third graders to become self/peer editors in writing?</li> </ul> <p><i>Poetry Writing:</i>  Feelings  Acrostic  Rhyming/Non-rhyming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does writing different genres of poetry help third graders develop their own creative voice in poetry?</li> </ul> <p><i>Writing Activities:</i>  Autobiography integrated with Good Shepherd visit  Poster projects/Tree unit  Posters/Candle Sale  Speech writing  Recipes  Advertisements  Postage stamp  Want Ad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does writing in different genres help third graders develop their own writing voice?</li> </ul> <p><b>Integrated Activities:</b></p>	<p>expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read independently</li> <li>• Respond personally to literature</li> <li>• Analyze literature for story elements, main idea, and comparisons</li> <li>• Answer questions about a story individually after having read it silently</li> <li>• Read grade level materials</li> <li>• Read for information</li> <li>• Locate information using table of contents, indexes, dictionaries, glossaries and other reference materials</li> <li>• Read from a variety of genres</li> <li>• Read poetry</li> </ul> <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the writing process (i.e. draft, editing, revision)</li> <li>• Create and write a poem</li> <li>• Write a brief informal report</li> <li>• Create a story map and write a story with a beginning, middle and end</li> <li>• Use computer as a writing tool</li> <li>• Writes for a variety of purposes (projects, creative writing, autobiography)</li> <li>• Starts note taking</li> <li>• Learns to use writing mechanics</li> <li>• Learns D’Nelian cursive writing</li> <li>• Write words legibly in cursive</li> </ul> <p>Use more conventional spelling</p>
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<p>Weekly spelling tests which include theme words from units of study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How do weekly spelling studies help students learn spelling rules and incorporate them into their own writing?</li></ul> <p>Poetry appreciation and recitation</p> <p>Kindergarten reading</p> <p>Following directions (in preparation for Terra Nova tests and using other learning materials)</p> <p>Conducting morning meetings and writing the class letter</p> <p>Teach note taking through Science and Social Studies Curriculum</p>	
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# LANGUAGE ARTS

## Grade 4

Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the main components of the language arts program. Through a literature based program children learn phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills needed to be successful learners. Activities are integrated in many areas of the curriculum. For example, students will journal about their scientific observations and explain math strategies orally and in writing. Although inventive spelling is acceptable in the earlier grades, children learn conventional spelling and writing mechanics so they have the skills necessary to move through the writing process. They learn about first drafts, editing, and revision to produce a final copy of which they can be proud. Creative writing, poetry, drama, computer skills, and research skills enhance our rich language arts program.

What is unique about Grade 4's approach to language arts?

The teaching of communication skills is pivotal in fourth grade language arts. Students develop these skills through experiences that increase comfort in speaking to an audience, critiquing each other's work and developing personal and interpersonal communication skills. Students return to research and engage in the process by reading to learn through multiple writing opportunities. Fourth graders are exposed to the analysis of literature through assigned roles such as questioning and making connections.

### Units of Study-Key Content- Essential Questions

### Concepts, Understandings, and Skills

<p>GRADE 4</p> <p><b>Speaking/Listening</b>  Morning meeting discussions  Prepare and deliver an oral report on a famous person or state  Literature groups  Guest speakers  Listening and speaking during content areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How and why do you tailor your presentation for different audiences and situations?</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading</b>  Genres/themes and books <u>may</u> include:  Mystery (Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, Boxcar Children), Fantasy (<i>Bunnica</i>, <i>Stuart Little</i>, <i>The Indian in the Cupboard</i>, <i>Animorphs</i>, <i>Magic Attic Club</i> ), Classics (<i>Heidi</i>, <i>Peter Pan</i>, <i>Little Women</i>, <i>Black Beauty</i>), Native American (<i>Sign of the</i></p>	<p>Speaking/Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to another person and carry on a conversation</li> <li>Ask questions of peers to clarify understanding</li> <li>Speak to an audience</li> <li>Articulate own opinions in relation to the opinions of others</li> <li>Make a formal report to the class from notes</li> </ul> <p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read a selection aloud with fluency and expression</li> <li>Read a wide variety of genres and cultures, and</li> </ul>
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*Beaver, Island of the Blue Dolphins, Bearstone*), Biography and Historical Fiction (John F. Kennedy, Albert Schweitzer, Harry Houdini), Jewish (*Good if it Goes, Christmas Revolution*), Historical Diaries (subjects on Native American, African American, Jewish, American history), Uncommon Courage (Jewish, Children in France, Native American)

Activities include:

- literature discussion groups
- packets with questions
- plays/skits
- vocabulary work
- taking perspectives
- What elements are involved in any genre? What do you gain and contribute to literature groups? How do you make personal connections to literature? How and why do you look at different character's points of view? How are dilemmas and conflicts essential to a story? How can literature teach you about time periods and cultures?

### **Writing**

Research

- How do we determine what information is important? Why do we need to communicate research in a different format than any other writing?

Native American research paper

- Why do we study Native Americans? How do they relate to the earth and nature? What are the parallels to the Native Americans culture and ours?

State research paper

Other projects may include:

- personal diaries
- short stories
- poetry
- questions for a purpose
- note taking
- interviews
- news articles
- letters

respond personally to literature

- Use context to predict meanings of words
- Identify cause and effect
- Identify main idea and supporting details in paragraph
- Independently locate detailed information on a topic using a variety of reference materials

Writing

- Write legibly in cursive
- Write increasingly complex sentences
- Write a story using descriptive language
- Write a paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting details, and concluding sentence
- Write a research paper

Improve use of correct punctuation, grammar and spelling

# LANGUAGE ARTS Grade 5

Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the main components of the language arts program. Through a literature based program children learn phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills needed to be successful learners. Activities are integrated in many areas of the curriculum. For example, students will journal about their scientific observations and explain math strategies orally and in writing. Although inventive spelling is acceptable in the earlier grades, children learn conventional spelling and writing mechanics so they have the skills necessary to move through the writing process. They learn about first drafts, editing, and revision to produce a final copy of which they can be proud. Creative writing, poetry, drama, computer skills, and research skills enhance our rich language arts program.

What is unique about Grade 5's approach to language arts?

In fifth grade the students have the opportunity to study writing skills in order to develop several different styles of speeches. The students learn about nonwestern countries through exposure to literature and research based reading, which is a new challenge as they become more sophisticated readers. Ultimately the year culminates with students presenting their research paper content through a final PowerPoint presentation.

## Units of Study- Key Content – Essential Questions

## Concepts, Understandings, and Skills

GRADE 5

### Writing Topics

#### Writer's Notebook

Students keep an active notebook where they have writing ideas, first drafts and shorter pieces of work. Many assignments are creative, and the notebook is often a starting point for many stories.

- How does a piece of writing progress over time? Where can one put free flowing thought on paper in order to further expand ideas, yet without critique?

### Speaking/ Listening

- Demonstrate active listening
- Engage in group debate on one side of an issue
- Demonstrate speaking abilities in front of class by presenting assignments
- Read with fluency in small and large groups

### Writing

- Organize details and thoughts in writing
- Organize sequential paragraphs, beginning with appropriate introductions and ending with logical transitions
- Apply spelling strategies

### Letter Writing

Students learn proper techniques for writing a variety of letters. (Thank You, Requests, Formal and Informal)

- What are the differences among letters and when is each type of letter used? What is the proper format for different types of letters?

### Public Speaking

Throughout the year, fifth graders will have numerous opportunities to convey a message in the form of a speech.

- How does a student write a speech in order to argue a point and inform an audience? What methods can be used to reach that goal?

### Study of Developing Countries

Each student thoroughly researches a developing country. Students are expected to create an interactive PowerPoint presentation. Students later create a realistic piece of fiction based on their exposure to that genre of literature and the developing country of research. The piece of fiction must contain ideas connected to research.

- What kind of experiences and lifestyles do people have around the world (specifically in non-western countries)?
- How do authors teach about another place through the art of creative fiction? How can we use the methods we have seen to develop entertaining fiction based on facts?

### Poetry

Students study several genres of poetry as well as poetic literary devices. They then create similar poetry in their own voice.

- How is poetry different from the standard narrative and what are the components of figurative language? How does form influence poetry?

- Create meaningful poetry
- Regularly edit and revise drafts
- Engage in systematic research
- Use conventional spelling, punctuation and grammar on all assignments.
- Develop appropriate conclusions for different genres of writing

### Reading/Analyzing

- Read required materials in a variety of genres
- Understand the main idea of a story
- Analyze plot, character, setting, passage of time and events of story
- Identifies literary elements within the story
- Sounds of Language/Literary Devices: alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, rhyme, rhythm
- Figures of Speech: metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification
- Reads aloud fluently and with expression
- Compare relationships between characters in a story
- Understand author's point of view
- Expand vocabulary through literature

Literature Units

Historical Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Nonfiction and free choice.

Examples of Books: *The Breadwinner*, *Homeless Bird*, *A Single Shard*, *Habibi*

- How can students broaden their knowledge of history, the world and people through literature?

# LANGUAGE ARTS

## Grade 6

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What is unique about Grade 6's approach to language arts?  
Sixth-grade language arts centers on conflict and resolution. The students begin the year by looking at how heroes in literature endure or overcome obstacles. They then examine bias and controversy in journalism in preparation for a central unit on Ethics in which they examine multiple points of view and then formulate their own opinions. The year ends with an examination of the build-up to the Holocaust, a reflection on loss and inheritance, and our own duty—and privilege—to remember people who came before us. As students learn to grapple with difficult issues and gray areas, they stretch themselves as writers, readers, thinkers.

### Units of Study – Key Content – Essential Questions

#### GRADE 6

##### The Hero's Journey

Students analyze the commonalities and differences of heroes' experiences in traditional mythologies, Star Wars, the daily news, contemporary literature, and even their own families. Students write myths, tell stories, and compare two of their favorite heroes in an essay.

- What is the hero's journey, and what can we learn about ourselves by studying this archetype? What are external and internal conflicts?

### Concepts, Understandings, and Skills

#### Speaking / Listening

- Participate in an extemporaneous discussions about topics they've studied and literature they've read; and give formal, rehearsed presentations
- Develop and support ideas with details, reasons, and examples
- Respond meaningfully and respectfully to comments made by other students

### **Introduction to Journalism**

In this brief unit, students study the main features of a news story. They try practice interviewing and learn to detect—and deal with—bias. They write a couple articles, take photos, and lay the stories out on the computer.

- What is journalistic style? Why are interviews so important?
- What is bias? How can we recognize bias, and how can we attempt to avoid bias in our own articles?

### **Ethics**

Students study a contemporary issue with an ethical component. They explore multiple viewpoints and then formulate their own opinions, which they share with the school community in a position paper and at a round table discussion.

- What are ethics and how does one make ethical decisions? How can I teach myself to explore an issue from multiple points of view? How do I decide what is ethical?

### **Memory—Oral History and the Holocaust**

In this interdisciplinary unit, students study the build-up to the Holocaust and, if possible, listen to a Survivor’s story. In language arts, they then have the privilege of learning about the past by talking to older people in their families and the larger Jewish community.

- How could the Holocaust happen?
- How can I share the responsibility of remembering the past and, specifically, its people? How will this experience benefit me?

### **Writers’ Workshop**

Students are expected to write in a variety of styles and for a variety of audiences throughout the year. Sometimes they write to learn—to formulate

- Tell stories using appropriate body language and voice inflection

### **Thinking**

- Distinguish fact from opinion
- Weigh multiple perspectives, and identify bias in essays and articles
- Examine their own biases, and formulate their own opinions on complex issues
- Understand the difficulty surrounding many ethical decisions

### **Reading**

- Read habitually and in a variety of genres
- Summarize (and respond to) the main ideas and components of a story, article, or essay
- Begin to analyze theme, conflict, and symbolism
- Use a variety of strategies to read and understand difficult texts

### **Writing**

- Write formal, multi-draft stories, essays, and research paper; and informal reflections
- Develop and support ideas with details, reasons, and examples
- Organize paragraphs and entire essays around main ideas
- Select words carefully, vary sentence style, and use transitions to express ideas precisely
- Use conventional spelling and punctuation on homework and published drafts

their own ideas. Sometimes they write more formal pieces, which go through multiple drafts. Students are expected to revise and copy edit formal pieces.

- What is important to me, and how can I best express my ideas in writing? How will my writing change if I employ different styles or points of view? How do I write a good ending?

### **Readers' Workshop**

Students read a minimum of 200 pages a month and keep journals on what they read. Students will also complete a number of creative and interpretive projects in response to the literature. The literature will often, but not always, connect to sixth-grade content areas.

- What do I enjoy reading, and how can I stretch myself as a reader? What connections can I make between what I read and the rest of my studies? How do I relate to the literature?

### **Grammar and Vocabulary (ongoing)**

Parts of speech, sentence structure and variety

# LANGUAGE ARTS Grade 7

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What is unique about Grade 7's approach to language arts?

Through a series of differentiated literature units, seventh graders are making connections between the themes in rich literature to the social and historical contexts the texts represent. Students increase their abilities to critically analyze more complex pieces of literature. As students read more complex pieces of literature, they continue to develop academic reading strategies to maintain reading for meaning.

## Units of Study – Key Content – Essential Questions

Seventh Grade

### Literature

#### Community Unit - Seedfolks

- Can a student apply concepts of community to understanding of “real-life” communities?

#### Rules in Society Unit

- Can a student recognize how historical context affects plot development and characterization? How does a student apply the concept of “rules” – both implicit and explicit rules – to their understanding of how societies operate?

#### Challenge Unit

- How does a student apply the concept of personal challenge to their understanding of what motivates fictional characters and real-world figures to take risks and seek adventure?

#### Heroism Unit

## Concepts, Understandings, and Skills

Pre-reading strategies

Literary Analysis

- Comprehension
- Characterization
- Setting
- Identifying structure/plot development
- Identifying conflict and resolution
- Symbolism
- Themes
- Point-of-view

Identifying imagery in poetry

Grammar

Vocabulary

Spelling

Research strategies

- Can a student identify qualities that make someone a hero or define an act of heroism?

#### Justice Unit

- Can a student differentiate fact from opinion in non-fiction? Can a student identify characteristics of an “unreliable or naïve narrator” in a novel?

#### Where is Home Unit

- Can a student identify elements of “immigrant literature” (fiction written by or about the experience of immigration)? Can a student research their own immigrant backgrounds and apply that knowledge to understanding the experiences of others?

#### Books Reports

Students read one outside book per term and complete a book report to provide opportunity for extended reading.

#### Writing

*Poetry* to provide an opportunity for creative expression

*Multi-paragraph essays* in order to learn ways to express and develop ideas in writing, and to learn logical order and coherence in writing as well.

*Descriptive, Narrative, and Comparison Essays* to explore various genres of writing and to learn various purposes for writing

#### Oral Presentations

Participation in class discussions and a variety of oral presentations to the class are integral in 7<sup>th</sup> grade language arts.

# LANGUAGE ARTS Grade 8

Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the main components of the language arts program. Through a literature based program children learn phonics, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills needed to be successful learners. Activities are integrated in many areas of the curriculum. For example, students will journal about their scientific observations and explain math strategies orally and in writing. Although inventive spelling is acceptable in the earlier grades, children learn conventional spelling and writing mechanics so they have the skills necessary to move through the writing process. They learn about first drafts, editing, and revision to produce a final copy of which they can be proud. Creative writing, poetry, drama, computer skills, and research skills enhance our rich language arts program.

What is unique about Grade 8's approach to language arts?  
Eighth graders are exposed to a wealth of classic literature including texts by Steinbeck and Shakespeare. Theatrical plays help students bring literature alive. Students build upon skills of note-taking and citation protocols as they embark in the research process. Eight graders participate in a month long writers workshop where their creative voice takes flight as they refine skills emphasized throughout the year such as word parts and grammar analysis.

## Units of Study – Key Content – Essential Questions

### Literature

#### Science and Religion

- Can a student recognize ways literature can serve as social commentary? Can a student define a variety of perspectives related to a controversial topic (e.g. teaching theories related to the origin of species)

#### Frontiers – Explorations

- Can a student recognize how historical context affects plot development and characterization?

#### Social Justice

- Can a student identify elements of setting in a novel? themes? symbolism? point-of-view? influence of social & historical context?

## Concepts, Understandings, and Skills

### Literary Analysis

- Comprehension
- Characterization
- Thematic understanding
- Historical context
- Symbolism
- Point-of-view

### Poetry Analysis

- Rhythm
- Imagery
- Theme
- Sounds

### Research strategies

- Generating ideas
- Finding source material
- Taking notes

A Midsummer Night's Dream

- Can a student follow separate plot-lines in a play?

Poetry

Book Reports

Students read one outside book per term and complete a book report to provide opportunity for extended reading.

Writing

*Poetry* to provide an opportunity for creative expression

*Multi-paragraph essays* to show knowledge

*Persuasive essay and research paper* help students explore different genres of writing and learn about different purposes for writing. The research paper builds upon the research methods taught in previous grades by introducing analysis, synthesis, thesis, and citation.

- Can students develop and support ideas in writing? Can students organize ideas logically and coherently in their writing?

Oral Presentations, Discussions

Identifying differing perspectives on an issue

Analyzing and synthesizing information

Paraphrasing, summarizing and quoting

Outlining

Organizing ideas logically and coherently

Constructing a thesis statement

Constructing an introduction and conclusion

Citing sources

Making revisions