

Literacy in ESD's Lower School

The ultimate goal of ESD's Lower School Language Arts Curriculum is for students to read, write, speak, and think critically. Simultaneously, we strive to promote the love of reading and to create a community of readers and writers with multiple skill levels. Our students experience the power of language as they communicate with others, express themselves, and engage in inquiry discussions with their peers. Reading and writing are the tools that help children find out what they want to know and are the platform upon which critical thinking skills are built. At ESD, literacy goes beyond basic skills and includes the higher-level abilities to think critically and creatively; to reason carefully; to inquire systematically into important matters; to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information; and to communicate effectively to a variety of audiences in a variety of forms.

Reading

Even the youngest readers at ESD strive to construct meaning as they read. Early Childhood students use a wide variety of skills to decode words; however, as they do this, teachers urge them to think inferentially, examining characters' feelings and motivations and to predict what might happen next. Whatever the grade level, we ask and teach our students to think deeply as they read; to synthesize, evaluate, and analyze information; and to express these ideas in a clear, coherent manner. Books--from non-fiction, to fiction, to poetry--provide a shared experience for a classroom of learners, which offers the raw materials for inquiry discussion. As children share their opinions about a book, they must work to build a logical argument, using specific examples from the text and their environment. Learning to think analytically as one reads is crucial to ESD's literacy program.

Writing

It is essential for students to become deeply involved in writing, to perceive themselves as authors, and to realize that writing allows them to construct deeper understanding. Writing is the concrete expression of a student's thought process, and as a child sees his or her ideas on paper, he or she is able to sharpen opinions and build a stronger argument. At ESD, we view writing as a problem-solving activity, during which budding authors must make numerous choices about how best to achieve their writing goals. Students use both reading and writing to explore and express their beliefs and to synthesize information. In order to use written communication effectively, students must learn to incorporate the conventions of writing, correct spelling, grammar, and usage, into their work.

As ESD students write, they must discover a topic, sense their audience, organize their ideas, and express these ideas in their own voices. Within the writing process, emphasis is placed on the natural and essential act of revision. A first draft enables children to see their ideas on paper. While revising, children find holes in their own reasoning, elaborate on ideas to make them more vibrant, and refine their paragraphs and sentences to make sure they are relevant. Furthermore, the revision process offers specific lessons in grammar usage and spelling, as children learn to recognize their own mistakes. ESD students explore a wide variety of genres including the research report, the expository essay, the personal narrative, literary analysis, fiction, journalistic articles, and poetry.

Speaking and Listening

Essential to both the reading and writing curriculum at ESD are the indispensable skills of speaking and listening. Inquiry discussions based on shared reading require students to express their thoughts, opinions, and arguments in a coherent manner. Children actively listen to one another and genuinely respond to the comments made by their peers. Through numerous public speaking opportunities, Lower School students learn to comport themselves before an audience and to speak in a way that is accessible to others.

Content strands by grade level are expressed on the next page:

Grade	Interactive Read-Aloud and Literature Discussion	Shared and Performance Reading	Writing about Reading	Writing	Conventions of Writing	Handwriting	Oral, Visual, and Technological Communication	Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study	Guided Reading
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Beginner	Build listening and engagement stamina to a variety of texts. Identify characters, setting, feelings and emotions connected to the text. Be able to identify the beginning, middle and end of a text. Recall basic information orally and share with the teacher or classmates.	Echo repeated story phrases, retell stories orally with teacher guidance.	Use drawings and interactive writing to retell events from a story, explain a character or setting and give information from a text.	Produce approximated writing using lines, shapes and symbols to tell a story.	Understand that letters can form words and that words give meaning to a text.	Use of <i>Handwriting Without Tears</i> Mat Man increases the body awareness required for handwriting development. Intense focus on development of fine motor muscles required for legible handwriting preparation.	Act out stories and engage in conversation during imaginative play; respond to and build on the statements of others; form clear questions to get information.	Distinguish between print and pictures, note print in the environment and look for its meaning, use left to right directionality.	
Pre-K	Notice, acquire and use new words from a text; follow and remember events to engage in meaningful dialogue about a text; retell a story aloud using pictures; tell story in response to a picture or prompt; mimic teacher's expression or word stress when reenacting a text; turn pages front to back; use schema to discuss a text; make predictions and describe	Use information from pictures to understand and remember text; follow the teacher's pointer in a coordinated way in shared reading; talk about meaning of new words; engage in shared reading with fluency and expression; use expression in response to punctuation, as well as phrasing, pausing and word stress; use titles and authors/illustrators names.	Use drawings, interactive writing or temporary spellings to explain and represent: - characters, their feelings and dialogue -actions -information from a text -create a story map -make predictions about a story -something in a child's life prompted by characters or plot in a story Label drawings	Tell stories for dictation with a clear beginning middle and end and use pictures, letter-like forms, letters or temporary spelling to create texts that have some characteristics of published texts; understand that print is laid out in a structured way and that lines and spaces are important; plan drawing and writing for a specific purpose; write for a variety of	Dictate simple conventional sentences that use subjects and verbs in agreement; use modifiers (adjectives and adverbs) to describe objects and actions; use past, present and future tenses correctly. Understand the difference between capital and lowercase letters and their usage. Understand there are	Write with a preferred hand using a tripod pencil grip. Handwriting Without Tears program used with a focus on numerous multi-sensory ways to form capital and lowercase letter. Use consistent and efficient motions to form letters.	Tell stories or speak about a single topic with confidence, clarity and in a logical sequence; actively listen to compare knowledge and experience; act out stories and engage in conversation during imaginative play; respond to and build on the statements of others; form clear questions to get information; verbalize reasoning for opinions and discuss cause and effect and comparisons.	Notice letter forms by parts, associate letter forms with sounds, recognize patterns in words visually and auditorily, recognize own name, recognize a few high frequency words, clap words to show awareness of syllables, make connections between own name and similar words,hear word boundaries, play with the sounds of language; begin to write words, letters or approximated letters in clusters to show the look of words.	

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	and the problem in a story; give reasons to explain thinking about a text; understand the structure or pattern of an intentionally sequenced text; form opinions about books and characters and explain why; use specific vocabulary to talk about reading.	writer/illustrator or uses special features, and when a text rhymes or is organized around special features; connect some letters in print with their names or known words; talk about characters, problems and events in a story.		draw and approximate writing about a continuous message on a single topic; reread own writing to others; initiate writing	read.				
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Kinder	Summarize a text in an efficient and linear manner using the key elements of plot, character, and conflict or the most salient information of a non-fiction text; infer character's intentions and feelings; interpret meaning; use details from the text to support an opinion or supposition; notice strategies and literary techniques the author uses.	Recognize high frequency words; remember and use repeating language or structure in a text; join in to and create predictive rhyming patterns; reflect meaning with the voice through pause, stress and phrasing indicated by punctuation; express personal connections and use schema to make meaning; recognize genre (fiction, non-fiction	Determine the most important plot points of a text and form opinions about characters based on evidence from it; compose story innovations on familiar texts; write about something in reader's own life prompted by a text; borrow the style, some words or expressions from an author; write both informational and narrative texts and explain the	Undertake writing in a variety of genres (functional, narrative, poetic and informational) ; write labels for items in the classroom and at home; write notes or friendly letters that demonstrate knowledge of a sender and receiver and a specific purpose; write functional lists according to conventions; write procedural pieces to give sequential	Begin to write simple conventional sentences that use subjects and verbs in agreement, prepositional phrases, modifiers (adjectives and adverbs) to describe objects and actions; write in past, present and future tenses correctly. Regularly use periods, increasingly use question marks and exclamation marks in writing and experiment	Lessons address grip, letter and number recognition, and capital, lowercase and number formation. Letters are introduced in order of their formation patterns. Students write letters and words that can be easily read, form upper and lowercase letters efficiently and proportionately. <i>Handwriting Without Tears</i> program used to make legible and fluent handwriting an automatic mastered skill.	Demonstrate ability to remember and follow multi-step instructions; engage in dramatic dialogue; use polite conversation conventions including turn taking and connected responses; use subject-specific vocabulary appropriately; verbalize reasons, cause and effect and solutions for events, problems and actions; logically and efficiently describe people, events, places and objects and their similarities and differences; ask MANY questions demonstrating curiosity; express and reflect on feelings of self and others, including characters	Understand the concept of a sentence as a group of words communicating a single idea; match one written to one spoken written word when reading; blend 2-3 phonemes in words; manipulate phonemes (mat-at, and-hand); connect words by their sounds (sat, sn); hear and say syllables; categorize letters by features (slant lines, circles, no circles, tall, small, etc.); recognize and produce names of all letters, lowercase and capital; understand	DRA Average: 8 Range: 2-28
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	illustrators and be able to explain they he/she is a favorite.	against own experience and other texts.		writing; use a variety of beginnings to engage readers; write one part or idea on a single page of a “book”; introduce ideas followed by reasons; experiment with new words in writing; make brainstorming lists before writing; make revisions to a draft that further develop a piece of writing; create a story web as a tool for pre-writing.	books. Attempt to spell unknown words with phonetic analysis, spell at least 25 high frequency words conventionally , use simply phonogram patterns, or word families, to generate words (fat, cat, mat); write words with consonant letters appropriate for beginning and ending sounds; write a letter for easy to hear vowels; construct phonetic spellings that are readable; use simple resources to check spelling;		clearly; have audience and purpose in mind when speaking; recite short poems; make brief oral reports that demonstrate understanding of a simple, familiar topic; use props to extend meaning.	when spelling words; write and read a core 50 high frequency words; recognize the parts of compound words and discuss their meaning; use known words in spelling unknown words.	
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1st Grade	Determine who, what, when, where, why and how from a text; make connections from the text to events in their own lives in the world and between texts; compare/contrast works by	Read aloud with fluency and expression that conveys meaning; participate in complex reading with alternate parts recognizing cues from text; notice and ask questions when meaning is lost; acquire meaning of	Write story responses including details and opinions about a favorite character, scene, or illustration; write about what was learned in a non-fiction text including	Write clear, concise complex sentences; reread to assure accuracy of sentence structure and meaning; write comfortably in poetic, narrative, informational and functional genres; write	Consistently write conventional sentences that use subjects and verbs in agreement, prepositional phrases, modifiers (adjectives and adverbs) to describe objects and actions; write in past	<i>Handwriting Without Tears</i> offers repetition and practice with basic letter formation and spacing, including sentence, word, and paragraph composition; forum upper- and lowercase letters efficiently and proportionately in	Actively listen and respond to others and share one’s own ideas and work; make brief oral reports that demonstrate understanding of a topic; ask question and make comments that are on topic; sustain a conversation with a variety of audiences; speak at a volume and rate to be understood	Individualized <i>Words Their Way</i> inventory and weekly word lists and <i>Secret Story</i> phonics instruction designed to increase phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and letter-sound relationship and the structure of words; identify	Reading strategies designed to improve accuracy, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Groups are flexible and may be formed or rearranged based upon student need for a specific skill being
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	similar subject; ask questions as a means of aiding comprehension ; use implicit information from a text to make predictions about the story's plot, evaluate predictions, and formulate and share new ones; summarize the main idea of a passage and the reasoning behind it; engage in book talks, or literature circles, to discuss books read independently	examination of context; make logical predictions and interpret meaning; express opinions about the appropriateness of an ending and offer alternatives; notice author's techniques in a text; compare texts and analyze similarities and differences.	the style or language from an author; complete maps of similarities and differences between texts; map components of a story, including the characters, setting, problem and resolution, and main events; compose story innovations on familiar texts.	enough detail and logical sequence that affords enjoyment and ease of understanding ; take pride in writing in a unique or surprising way; maintain a writer's notebook with ideas and information for stories and make choices about topic selection; self-evaluate writing and talk about what one likes and one wants to improve; produce a quantity of writing within a given time frame; write independently rather than waiting for direction from a teacher.	consistent throughout a piece. Use conventional text layout consistently; spell 150 high frequency words conventionally ; reread writing and mark parts that are unclear or require editing using proper notation; recognize and use synonyms and antonyms; recognize and use suffixes that change the tense of a verb; use possessives and plurals correctly.		Find and use buttons, icons and keys on a computer keyboard or screen; use a mouse and keyboard efficiently.	follow phonetic rules; infer meaning of a word based on its base/root; construct phonetic spellings that are readable and logical; include a vowel in each word; represent consonant blends and digraphs with letter clusters; recognize and use a large number of phonograms (VC, CVC, CVCe, VCC); use resources to check spelling; make a second attempt to respell a misspelled word. DRA Average: 25 Range: 12 - 38	books including some series books with more sophisticated plots and fewer illustrations, as well as shorter informational and fiction books. Students begin to recognize themes across text and understand abstract ideas; they see multiple perspectives of characters process complex sentences with embedded clauses and figurative language.
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2nd Grade	Make inferences from a text to draw conclusions and make predictions; use explicit information to articulate the main idea of a text; make connections between	Read with a high fluency and accuracy rate; self-correct intonation when reading aloud; participate actively in complex reading with alternate parts	Accurately retell a single moment from a text using own words; state and substantiate an opinion about a text using evidence; grow a big idea or original hypothesis	Write organized paragraphs that, in narrative, convey a complete "scene" or snapshot, and in non-fiction, contain sentences organized	Use pronouns that agree with an antecedent; write with subject-verb agreement; write using conventions for dialogue and letter writing; correctly use apostrophes	<i>Handwriting Without Tears</i> program introduces clean, vertical style of cursive with a focus on legibility. Letters are introduced in order of formation patterns. Begin to learn keyboarding skills	Listen to remember and follow multi-step directions; listen actively, give feedback and build on the ideas of others; structure a verbal argument; use a mouse and keyboard to effectively and efficiently navigate the computer and search for information; use spell check and	Spell the correct form of a plural noun; correctly use comparative and superlative form of adjectives; recognize and use both short and long vowel sounds in words with both open and closed syllables and with the letter /r/ as	Readers process a full range of genres, follow more elaborate plots and multiple characters who develop and change over time, can identify and use underlying structures to make meaning. Students use a
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	it; discuss the style of an author's body of work; form and state the basis for opinions about authors, illustrators and texts and explain why; make extensive connections to prior knowledge by topic, major ideas, authors' styles and genres and specify the nature of these connections; develop new concepts and ideas from listening to and discussion texts; interpret the significance of events in a story; use evidence from a text to support predictions..	feelings in the voice while reading; recognize and identify parts of stories and structures of texts of different genres; begin to note the subtle changes in meaning that a writer can convey through word choice; notice when a writer has used a word with different connotations and reflect this in the voice.	an opinion; produce innovations on a text by changing ending, series of events, the characters or the setting; make notes from informational texts; produce a simple graphic representation of a text; compare and contrast different versions of the same story or traditional tale; identify the genre of a text.	beginnings and endings that engage a reader; present ideas clearly; organize ideas in a structure appropriate to a genre; bring a piece to closure through a summary statement; provide supporting evidence to a main idea or topic sentence that is accurate, relevant and helpful; show instead of tell using writing; show an ability to vary a text through diffuse word choice; write with independence, initiative and investment.	correct punctuation; use a range of complete sentences (declarative, interrogative, exclamatory); use nouns and pronouns in agreement; regularly demonstrate knowledge of the rules of capitalization; understand the use of a full range of punctuation marks including periods, commas, apostrophes, question marks, exclamation points, ellipses and dashes.		writing for publication; create simply multimedia projects.	and use letters that have no sound (lamb); recognize and use a large number of phonogram patterns (VC, CVC, CVCe, VCC, WC, WCC, WCe, VCCC, WCCC); read and write over 200 high frequency words; recognize and form present and past tenses by using endings, endings that show comparisons and contractions.	on meaning. Length of text is no longer a critical factor as they read texts that vary greatly. DRA Average: 27 Range: 16 - 50
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3rd Grade	Use explicit information from a text to recall who, what, when, where, why, how and to infer a theme or main idea and its supporting elements; synthesize implicit and	Perform original, dramatic renditions of a story demonstrating a character's motivation and personality with tone of voice, props and actions; notice when a story has	Summarize a text in writing; use specialized vocabulary from a text; use notes as basis for discussion or future writing; explain how an author's technique impacts	Combine organized paragraphs into a logical sequence of scenes to create a story arc or in non-fiction to create a clear progression of ideas; write thesis statements	Write sentences with embedded clauses and correctly use and punctuate dialogue; Use layout, spacing and size of print to create titles, headings and subheadings; use	<i>Handwriting Without Tears</i> program reinforces legible, fluent formation of cursive letters. Keyboarding expectations: 15 wpm at 90% accuracy	Listen with attention and respond with statements and questions that grow understanding and development of an idea; explain and describe people, events, places and objects in a manner that is easy to understand and enjoyable; use the google platform to	Correctly spell a large core of high-frequency words (350+); use knowledge of syllables and phonogram patterns to generate multi-syllable words; spell most possessives, contractions and compound words.	Readers process a full range of genres with multiple chapters; texts offer an increased use of symbolism and readers are pressed to understand perspectives different from their own as characters and
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	draw conclusions and construct an argument about a text and between texts; notice and understand conflict and how it is resolved; notice and remember the attributes in a character's development; make connections between the lives of characters and their own lives; hypothesize underlying motivations of characters and how the setting impacts their decisions and attitudes; recognize, understand and discussion some symbolism and motifs; notice and name decisions the author has made.	understanding of the subtle changes in meaning a writer conveys through word choice; read aloud with fluency, accuracy and phrasing and self-correct with automaticity.	the text; write about something from own life as prompted by a text; develop a structured argument about a character, an author's technique or a theme, motif or symbol; compare authors or texts using a graphic organizer.	transitions between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs; write with singular purpose, clear organization and understanding of the intended audience; use a variety of techniques to engage the reader; gather and internalize information and then write it in own words; vary sentence structure, use figurative language to create multi-sensory images and literary techniques to make your point; accumulate a wide range of story seeds in the writer's notebook to write with initiative, investment and independence; self-evaluate own writing for substantive improvement and seek feedback on writing;	sentences; follow all rules of capitalization and punctuation regularly; understand that excellence in editing demonstrates respect for the reader.		helpful information.	(adverbs often end in -ly or -ed, -es, -ing, -d determine verb tense), understand that consonants can be represented by a variety of consonant clusters; use a variety of letters and letter combinations to accurately represent vowel sounds.	silent although fluency and phrasing in oral reading is well established; readers challenged by longer or content-specific words and have skills to uncover meaning; search and use information in an integrated way. DRA Average: 48 Range: 30 - 60+
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	new vocabulary words to use in discussion and in writing; follow complex plots, tracking multiple events and gathering information about many characters and their traits and relationships; gather information from factual texts and use strategies to remember it; recognize, understand and discuss symbolism; infer characters' feelings and motivations from description, what they do or say and what other characters think of them; articulate opinions and ideas based on a logically structured argument and change opinions or understanding based on new information or	phrasing in unison with others and in solo parts; remember and select key information from a text for a dramatic performance or retelling; work collaboratively with a group to design scripts and perform them in a way that reflects deep understanding; use tone of voice to communicate a range of meanings; weave the story around a play by examining the dialogue.	abstract understanding of a text; provide specific examples and evidence to support written statements about the quality, accuracy or craft of a text; provide details that are important to understanding the relationship among plot, setting, and character traits; make connections between historical and cultural knowledge of a text; show connections between the setting, characters, conflict and events of a text and a reader's own personal experiences; interpret mood, themes, symbols and motifs in writing.	that convey a single idea and narratives that develop characters, define a conflict and convey a theme. Demonstrate fluent composition in expository, creative/expressive, persuasive and literary analysis genres as specified in this list of outcomes .	complex sentences with embedded clauses and phrases; understand and use paragraph structure to organized sentences to focus on one idea; create transitions between paragraphs to show a progression of ideas; write according to grammatical rules for all punctuation and capitalization; use nouns and pronouns in agreement, object and nominative case pronouns, indefinite and relative pronouns, frequently misused verbs and objects; maintain consistency of tense.	Use efficient keyboarding skills to create drafts, revise, edit and publish. Keyboarding expectations: 23 wpm at 90% accuracy	aids that are logically organized, engaging and demonstrate a depth of knowledge. Use the full range of the Google platform to collaborate, communicate and create; understand the ethical issues that accompany responsible use of technology; verify the authenticity of multiple online sources; locate and validate information on the Internet from approved sites.	range of plurals, and base words with inflectional endings; be aware of the spelling of common affixes; spell a full range of contractions, plurals, possessives and all compound words.	sentences and paragraphs as well as many multi-syllable or technical words; readers understand and respond to mature themes, motifs, symbols and moral issues; readers encounter abstract, special forms of literature including satire and literary language that conveys irony; themes and characters are multidimensional ; most reading is silent and independent requiring readers to bring their constructed thoughts and supporting argument to the group; texts include archaic language or regional dialect, as well as complex graphics that require students to apply prior understandings in a critical way.
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	insights gained from text or discussion; compare perspectives with other readers and build on the ideas of others in discussion; think critically about informational texts in terms of quality of writing, accuracy and logic of conclusions; use specific vocabulary to talk about texts.								
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