

south city community school
to cultivate the love of learning

Language Arts Curriculum & Overview

Language Arts is an originally written curriculum at SCCS, pulling together the best of writings by Charlotte Mason, Katie Johnson, Katie Wood Ray, and Debbie Miller, among others. ***The two pillars of our Language Arts curriculum are our Literature-Rich Curriculum approach of “living books,” and our Writing approach.***

Reading / Literature-Rich Curriculum

“Living books” (a term coined by Charlotte Mason) form the first pillar of our Language Arts curriculum and are at the core of every subject at SCCS. These are simply the “best” books – both classic and modern – written by the “best” minds that make a subject come alive to the student. Students in all grades listen and/or read many living books in most subjects, including works of poetry, fiction and non-fiction. The books selected for our curriculum also increase in volume, depth of writing and description, and higher level vocabulary each year.

Writing

Writing is the second pillar of our Language Arts program, and students are encouraged to “write” at their developmental level beginning in PreK-3. In Kindergarten, the students transition to the “Doing Words” approach, through writing stories that are self-selected by the students and reflect their own thoughts and experiences. Students in Kindergarten and above continue to grow as writers, learning about phonics, spelling, writing mechanics, vocabulary, genre and style as they write often and share their writing with their teacher and classmates.

Tools and Mentor Texts

Doing Words by Katie Johnson

Already Ready by Katie Wood Ray and Matt Glover

Wondrous Words by Katie Wood Ray

Hearing and Reading, Telling and Writing by Sonya Shafer

Personal dictionaries

Magnetic letter boards

Reading Instruction

In PreK, our students work on pre-reading skills that include learning the letters and their sounds, listening to living books and learning to rhyme and alliterate. In Kindergarten, students begin learning to read with *Oxford Reading Tree* books. These books, published by Oxford University Press in England, combine sight and decodable words through interesting, engaging stories that the students enjoy reading. The students progress at their own pace through the books that increase in length and difficulty in incremental steps. Decodable books (for example, *Bob Books*) are also used as supplements for students who need more practice with phonics and decoding. By the time the students are finished with the Oxford books (usually late in First Grade) they are ready to read books like *Frog and Toad* and *Amelia Bedelia* on their own. By Second Grade, the students are “reading to learn” using short books and passages at their reading level.

Tools and Mentor Texts
Oxford Reading Tree series
Magnetic letter boards

Handwriting

We use the *Handwriting Without Tears* program in PreK3 – 4th grade. Students also work on their handwriting (and reading, writing, spelling and grammar) through doing copy work starting in 2nd grade and dictation starting in 4th grade (writing down Bible passages, poetry or meaningful quotes from a copy, or from the teacher’s dictation / reading it aloud). Students begin learning cursive in Third Grade and continue with whatever writing style they choose through the Presidential Penmanship curriculum in Fifth Grade.

Tools and Mentor Texts
Handwriting Without Tears by Jan Olson
Presidential Penmanship

Phonics and Spelling

Phonics skills are taught from the very beginning, with PreK-3 and PreK-4 students being introduced to letters and their sounds. The students also develop their phonemic awareness skills by learning to rhyme and alliterate.

Beginning in Kindergarten, explicit phonics and spelling instruction occurs daily through the pillar of Writing. ***By teaching phonics and spelling through writing, the self-selected words that students need and want to learn to read, sound, and spell are more meaningful to them, entering into long-term memory rather than merely the short-term memory that is engaged when studying for traditional spelling programs with weekly word lists and tests.***

In Kindergarten through Third grade, teachers also provide Phonics and Spelling “mini-lessons”, as well as working individually with students to master phonics and spelling skills relevant to each student’s writing. Students also do “Word Sorts” activities that work on both sight word memorization and spelling and phonics pattern identification.

Tools and Mentor Texts
Spelling in Use by Katie Wood (Ray) and Lester Laminack
Words Their Way by Donald Bear and Marcia Invernizzi
Doing Words by Katie Johnson
Personal dictionaries
Magnetic letter boards

Writing Mechanics and Grammar

Basic writing mechanics instruction occurs within the pillar of Writing at SCCS, beginning in Kindergarten, with mini-lessons or individual instructions on the fundamentals of punctuation, capitalization, and basic parts of speech.

Formal grammar instruction begins at SCCS in 4th grade with the introduction of the *Analytical Grammar* curriculum and student workbook. “*Analytical Grammar* teaches English grammar, punctuation, and usage... through an innovative and logical method that is not only extremely effective, but makes learning grammar fun”.

(www.analyticalgrammar.com). Lessons provided go through “seasons” of instruction with breaks for review and repetition in between.

Tools and Mentor Texts
Analytical Grammar

Comprehension

Listening and reading comprehension is integrated into almost every aspect of the school day. Beginning in PreK-3, students begin to learn to narrate (tell back) what they have heard after a read aloud or lesson. As the students grow and develop, their ability to narrate develops as well and they begin to synthesize ideas as they narrate, demonstrating their comprehension of what they are learning. As students begin to read, they also tell back (in a variety of ways, including drawing, writing and oral narrations) what they have learned. In First Grade, reading comprehension skills are explicitly taught using the framework in *Reading With Meaning* by Debbie Miller.

Tools and Mentor Texts
 Narration
Reading With Meaning by Debbie Miller

Language Arts Scope and Sequence

	PreK	Kindergarten	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
Reading instruction								
Writing								
Handwriting / Manuscript								
Cursive								
Pres. Penmanship								
Phonics								
Spelling								
Writing Mechanics								
Grammar								
Reading Comp.								
Narration								
Latin for grammar								

shaded bars indicate pre-work has begun / darkly colored bars indicate explicit instruction has begun