

# Lower School English Course Descriptions

## Kindergarten

Introducing the young child to literacy in a variety of methods that will lay the foundation for a lifelong love of reading and writing is a major component of the kindergarten program. This is accomplished with the use of a balanced reading program that includes strong phonics instruction, independent reading, shared reading, and teacher read-alouds. Writing experiences are emphasized through journal writing and language experience stories.

## First Grade

Through modeled, shared, small group and one-on-one reading, students develop skills in re-telling, making connections, making predictions, sequencing, and synthesizing. A large variety of book study units on fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and multicultural books are used to help students learn to read for meaning. Phonemic awareness is emphasized through letter/sound association, hard consonant sounds, hard and soft vowel sounds, and digraphs and blends. Through guided reading, independent work, sight words practice, and comprehension exercises, the children will increase their confidence and reading abilities.

Through creative writing projects, we build spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Students practice descriptive, narrative and expository writing. The students will have many opportunities to write creatively and work through the writing process. Writing will be integrated into science, social studies and math.

## Second Grade

Reading emphasizes the development of higher-level skills such as listening, inferential thinking, plot and setting, sequencing, and characterization. The students learn to read for information by exploring and responding to various forms of literature. Second Grade students communicate and participate in both written and oral language routines through independent and group activities. Identified language skills are highlighted within the students' writing and emphasized throughout all areas of study.

## Third Grade

The goal of the third grade Language Arts Curriculum is to develop the foundation of competence in the use of the English language. Through the experiences of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, the goal is to develop literate and fluent readers and writers. The units of study are built around a skills-intensive curriculum based in the areas of literature, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. Through their experiences of reading, listening, writing, and speaking, students increase their level of success in becoming literate and fluent readers and writers with more advanced grammar skills and intellectual vocabularies. Reading activities include but are not restricted to whole group, shared and guided reading groups, individual reading, vocabulary development, making predictions, retelling stories, using clues in context, drawing conclusions, fiction/non-fiction, poetry and experience with different genres of literature to expand their pleasure reading.

## **Fourth Grade**

Students enrolled in Allen Academy in fourth grade will read independently, as well as in a variety of groups, to acquire knowledge and information relating to all content areas. Fourth grade children are given guidance toward quality genres of literature and are responsible for sharing their knowledge in various methods within the classroom such as written book reports and book talks. Activities that highlight grammar, punctuation, and the mechanics of writing are assigned to strengthen students' reading and writing skills. Student vocabulary is strengthened through the use of vocabulary units that challenge students to identify relationships among word groups. Throughout the course of the students' fourth grade school year, students will display growth in the contents of reading and writing through application of learned skills.

## **Fifth Grade**

In this course, students continue to read independently, while also seeking deeper levels of understanding by communicating their observations and questions. Students focus on studying historical fiction and nonfiction literature and develop the ability to form short answer and essay responses. An appreciation of literary elements and devices is emphasized through novels and short stories. Vocabulary and spelling development continues, including an emphasis on word roots and affixes. Students also study the 6 + 1 Traits of Writing, as well as grammar mechanics and usage. Weekly journal writing offers students an opportunity to practice these writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills. Students demonstrate their learning through traditional quizzes and tests, as well as through seminars, multimedia projects, and oral presentations.