

English Language Arts (Christine Knowles)

The study of English Language Arts at The New School begins with relationships: the relationships between people and the relationships between ideas. ELA classes honor the individual strengths and contributions of all students and offer a supportive environment for students to develop their own relationships with a wide variety of texts. Attention is given to understanding the context of ideas as well as the influence of ideas on one another. Intertextuality is a key understanding developed in Language Arts courses at TNS. Students are continually offered opportunities to identify existing connections in texts and to forge new ones for themselves.

Because effective communication is vital for forming and maintaining relationships, students practice and refine their skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking—the four components of communication. Through discussion, group work, and oral presentations, students become active oral communicators. Participating in LEAP Nights, Round Tables, and other public forums like All School Meetings offers students authentic opportunities to practice their communication skills. Students are exposed to a wide variety of appropriately challenging literary and non-literary texts across multiple genres, time periods, cultures, and narrative traditions. They are encouraged to pursue independent exploration in reading and writing, as well. Making connections between ideas and developing transferable skills, like communication skills listed above, will provide students with tools that will aid them in lifelong learning.

Every act of reading, writing, speaking, or listening, is an act of thinking. Developing literacy and communications skills cannot be separated from developing critical thinking skills. Students will be challenged to reach outside their expressive comfort zones and will be exposed to many forms of discourse including expository, persuasive, narrative, and expressive modes of thinking. Additionally, the Language Arts Program at TNS supports students to develop a distinctive speaking and writing voice. Fostering self-expression and empowering students to speak and write with authority are vital component of the democratic processes of the school.

Learning is a dynamic, ongoing, fundamental process of life that extends far beyond the schoolroom. ELA courses at TNS are designed with student input and seek to actively present authentic, relevant learning opportunities in the intimate community of the classroom and extending into the local and the global community. Media and technology literacy are embedded in most of the courses offered at TNS.