

English Language Arts

Student mastery of the language arts is essential to success in all subject areas as well as inquiry learning, critical thinking, and problem solving. Accomplished teachers know effective strategies and skills that support reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and multimodal representation. They understand how children acquire and become adept at using oral and written language. Teachers recognize that language is socially, politically, historically, and culturally defined and that its use can vary by ability, gender, region, socioeconomic status, education, and culture. They therefore provide instruction that includes a wide variety of textual materials to appeal to their students' interests while furnishing them with access to information that will help them navigate the world in which they live.

Accomplished teachers draw on students' cultural and linguistic experiences as resources for enhancing their communication skills. They employ strategies, adaptations, and resources designed to aid language and literacy development based on students' specific strengths and needs. With students for whom English is a new language, teachers are aware of second language acquisition techniques and thus recognize that a student's first language can be used to support the transference of English communication skills. Accomplished teachers advocate for these students and work to obtain the necessary resources for their acquisition of language.

Accomplished teachers provide balanced literacy programs that may include diverse structures such as collaborative or independent reading from a variety of genres. Whether students are emergent, early, or fluent readers, teachers incorporate

reading strategies that build on students' strengths and meet their needs to construct meaning. These programs may include careful use of skills and strategies for word identification, vocabulary building, comprehension, critical thinking, and fluency. Teachers also provide a number of real and significant opportunities before, during, and after reading for students to express themselves orally and in writing. These processes help students become articulate about the content being studied while developing their analytical skills and building a curiosity that motivates independent exploration.

Accomplished teachers advance their students' development of communication skills through the mutual reinforcement of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Teachers regard these communication skills as reciprocal processes that result in the construction of meaning. They understand the vital role that oral language plays in learning and know that oral and written language are best learned in language-rich environments that provide opportunities to vary language use depending on audience, situation, and purpose. Accomplished teachers employ a variety of methods for students to explore written and oral language so they can communicate effectively in society and achieve personal goals. Teachers also emphasize the importance of critical listening so that students understand that listening well contributes to effective communication and thorough understanding. They are adept at teaching their students how speaking relates to writing and how to recognize and use the conventions of written English. Developing these skills contributes to the proficiency of students as readers, writers, speakers, and viewers.

Accomplished teachers instruct students to approach writing as a means of communicating with others as well as a means of self-expression. They scaffold students' learning through strategies such as modeling, teacher-guided and group-assisted writing activities, and individual student conferences to advance student facility with different steps of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. They understand that writing can help develop thinking skills, facilitate personal expression, and enable students to explore the use of different voices and purposes for different audiences. Making use of available instructional tools, they provide students with many opportunities to apply written language skills across curricula using traditional or electronic means—writing explanations of solutions to mathematical problems; writing a research report for science; writing an editorial about a social studies issue; critiquing art; creating stories, poems, or plays; or submitting queries or comments to Web sites. They employ a number of ways to involve their students in meaningful representations of ideas and concepts.

Accomplished teachers facilitate meaningful communication and provide opportunities for students to express themselves orally as individuals, group members, and leaders through activities such as presentations, speeches, debates, and panel discussions, as well as through the use of digital media. They help students understand and appreciate diversity in language and communicative styles, and they model the fluent use of spoken English. Teachers know and stress to their students when to use formal or academic English to promote greater access to personal success, civic influence, and financial independence. They are also aware that

having a shared form of English facilitates communication across societal divisions. However, they respect that dialects or languages may be important to students' home and community lives and understand that these contribute to students' learning and feelings of belonging. Consequently, while protecting the integrity of their students' primary dialect or language, they help every student gain command of academic English.