

English Language Arts

Philosophy and Rationale

What Is English Language Arts?

English language arts draws from many disciplines that lay the groundwork for a rich subject that fosters a deeper understanding of the world, a focus on the significance of story in our lives, and an appreciation of creative, critical, functional and purposeful expression. As a Kindergarten to Grade 12 subject, English language arts builds on students' early language skills and experiences through reading and writing, listening and speaking, and viewing and representing—six interconnected modes that facilitate and develop thought and enrich communication. The subject encompasses the study of language and literature and helps foster the development of literacy. Engaging with texts plays a central role in English language arts, for texts help to illuminate, reveal and contextualize the concepts and processes essential to the subject. English language arts is both work and play, drawing from creative and artistic disciplines that encourage students to engage with language and image, experiment with expression and art, and become keen observers of the world.

Why Is English Language Arts Important?

Over the course of Kindergarten to Grade 12, students come to understand that language is a socially and culturally constructed system of communication and a means of exploring and expressing ideas, information and feelings. As they learn to communicate, students in English language arts make observations, ask questions, hypothesize and form opinions. Students use these skills to share thoughts, ideas and experiences, and to acknowledge those of others. As they reflect on their own thinking, they identify ideas for further inquiry. Students learn to navigate, gather and evaluate information so that they might learn about the ever-changing world. Connecting deeply to the world through inquiry, research and text study, students develop an awareness of context, audience and purpose, and come to understand their ethical responsibilities as creators and interpreters of text.

As students are exposed to a variety of texts, they encounter new vocabulary, ideas and modes of expression. Through the study of texts, students not only develop knowledge, they discover and explore who they are as human beings, reflecting on their emotions and experiences, recognizing their biases, and identifying their passions. In addition to developing perspective and empathy, students develop self-awareness, self-efficacy, persistence and strategies for problem solving and risk taking. The English language arts program offers students and teachers the opportunity to choose texts that stimulate students' imaginations, challenge their understandings of what is known and provoke further questions for study. Students are encouraged to engage with a wide variety of texts created by individuals who have come to shape Canadian society and culture as well as texts by individuals who have walked diverse paths in many places and times. Engaging

with a variety of texts provides opportunities for students to understand that language is deeply contextual. Through reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and representing, students come to know these histories and develop an understanding of themselves, their communities and their world.

In English language arts, as students read, view and listen to texts, they develop an understanding of the artistry and craft involved in text creation. By reflecting on, studying, imitating and experimenting with the features and structures of a variety of texts, students come to see the ways in which text creators play with and shape language to inform, entertain, inspire, challenge and motivate change. As students write, speak and represent, they become co-creators of, and co-contributors to, the rich fabric of Canadian culture. Students become authors, presenters, publishers, researchers and more as they participate in text creation. By studying and practising the processes involved in authentic text creation, they discover and develop their own voices while learning about and celebrating the ways in which their own texts and stories can shape their communities.

Over the course of Kindergarten to Grade 12, students come to understand the power of engaging with texts and language independently in their lives outside of the classroom as they prepare for future careers. They learn to make choices that nurture meaningful experiences with texts and form habits and strategies that foster positive attitudes towards reading and writing, speaking and listening, and viewing and representing. Through study, exploration and reflection, English language arts cultivates an appreciation of the function, beauty and joy in word and image, and a lifelong love of language.

Inclusive Education

A curriculum that is inclusive involves recognizing and valuing the diversity of all students. The English language arts curriculum is designed in a manner that is flexible and removes barriers to learning. It recognizes the ongoing processes involved in supporting the diverse learning needs of all students and facilitates opportunities for student choice, leading to increased motivation, engagement and achievement.

The English language arts curriculum is designed to be responsive to students' need for multiple points of entry to build upon their current abilities in a flexible environment that respects the unique development of all students' language learning. English language arts supports students in expressing their learning needs by providing opportunities for self-advocacy and connection to their community. There are multiple modalities for students to demonstrate learning and meet high expectations for individual progress. The English language arts curriculum is intentional in its use of texts offered in multiple formats, representing multiple perspectives and encouraging the development of individual student voice.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Experiences and Perspectives

In English language arts, students explore a variety of texts that reflect, honour and celebrate diverse First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, identities and perspectives. The rich history of oral storytelling provides opportunities for students to learn from the accumulated narratives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit that bring historical and contemporary ways of knowing, thinking and being to life for students.

Introducing texts that address treaties and agreements, as well as residential schools and their legacy, will enable students to learn from and respond to personal and collective stories and experiences. Texts that portray accurate, respectful and authentic First Nations, Métis and Inuit voices enrich students' understandings of the contributions, vibrancy and resiliency of the First Peoples of Canada. To understand and value diverse voices is essential in flexible and critical thinking. Opportunities for students in English language arts to learn about First Nations, Métis and Inuit experiences and worldviews advance a shift in thinking that fosters reconciliation.

Francophone Cultures and Perspectives

Given that Canada is a bilingual country and that bilingualism is part of our national identity, Francophone cultures and perspectives can be reflected in English language arts through a variety of authentic contexts. Through literature, the arts and other texts, students are able to broaden their understanding of diverse perspectives and gain valuable insight into the diversity that exists among Francophones. Francophones from around the world make significant contributions to the understanding and development of language. In English language arts, purposeful text selection provides opportunities to acknowledge and integrate different Francophone characters, historical and contemporary figures, and text creators from Alberta, Canada and around the world. By addressing Francophone perspectives in English language arts, all students gain a better understanding of identities in Canada and develop a greater appreciation for their own identity and cultural roots.

Literacy

English language arts is central to the development of **literacy**¹ and literacy enhances students' understanding of the subject. Within the context of English language arts, students acquire the foundational literacy that they need to understand and appreciate language and to use it for communication, personal satisfaction and learning. These foundational skills are essential to the development of literacy in all other subjects and disciplines. In English language arts, students learn and apply literacy as they comprehend, interpret and create oral, print, visual and multimodal texts for a range of audiences and purposes and within a variety of contexts or

¹ Literacy is the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning.

situations. Literacy awareness, knowledge and understanding in English language arts provides the foundation for lifelong learning and active participation in society.

Numeracy

Numeracy² in English language arts enriches the study of the subject and contributes to the development of a broader and deeper understanding of numeracy itself. When the quantitative and spatial concepts specific to English language arts are made explicit, students see how they can transfer their mathematical understandings and relevant vocabulary in purposeful ways. Students' comprehension of oral, print, visual and multimodal texts is strengthened when they use their numeracy skills to interpret data, graphs and design features, to determine the chronology of events, to make predictions, or to interpret quantitative information. When constructing texts, students use numeracy when, for example, organizing information, sequencing ideas, designing story maps, incorporating visual representations or determining how to use the space on a screen or a page. Numeracy awareness, knowledge and understanding enhance students' comprehension of the texts, ideas and perspectives explored in English language arts and strengthen their ability to communicate effectively.

Competencies

Competencies are combinations of attitudes, skills and knowledge that students apply for successful learning, living and working. They emphasize aspects of learning that apply within and across all subjects. Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 learning outcomes in English language arts provide contexts for students to apply and develop the following competencies:

- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Managing Information
- Creativity and Innovation
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Cultural and Global Citizenship
- Personal Growth and Well-being

² Numeracy is the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with quantitative and spatial information to make informed decisions.