



September 2022

Welcome to Language Arts!

My name is Hailey Neal and I'll be helping you learn to be a better reader, writer and speaker. This class will help you develop and improve your reading, writing, discussion and speaking skills. Additionally we'll learn new vocabulary and work on writing mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.). These skills will help you prepare for high school and help you to become a better communicator.

Contact Information

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Overview of the Year

The year is divided into three trimesters. The first two trimesters address a shared, integrated theme with Social Studies and Science. In the third trimester we'll complete an independent poetry unit.

Trimester 1: Identity and Place

- a) We'll read *Return to Sender*, by Julia Alvarez, and segments of *The Most Costly Journey* (published by The Vermont Folklife Center) to explore the experience of migrant workers from Latin America on dairy farms in Vermont.
- b) We will explore the themes of identity and place by engaging in creative writing activities and nature journals that involve going outside!
- c) This unit will include writing a letter with a pen-pal from another place in the world and some other smaller projects like creating a "constellation" that represents who you are as a person.

Trimester 2: World Beliefs

- d) We will consider our identities through the lens of our beliefs.
- e) We will ask ourselves how science, religion, and family values shape who we are and what we believe.
- f) We will read *Refugee* by Alan Gratz and *Night* by Elie Wiesel.

Trimester 3: Who Am I? (Immigration)

- g) We will return to and build on themes from the beginning of the year by examining the subject of immigration.
- h) We will examine the art of the short story and read exciting and engaging stories to learn from them.
- i) Students will write their own short stories and assemble them into a collection to be shared with the Sharon community.

The Sharon Academy uses a Proficiency-Based Grading system, I will highlight which proficiencies we will focus on this year. A proficiency is a skill or content standard that students will strive to meet or exceed by the end of their two years at TSA. For each proficiency, a student will have multiple opportunities--through written work, projects, revisions, etc--to show whether they are meeting the standard.

Transferable Skills: TSA's Gateway Standards

This year, the TSA middle and high school students are focusing on the following 7 transferable skills: 1) Acquire Information, 2) Reason, 3) Design, 4) Communicate, 5) Self-Direct, 6) Engage with Community, 7) Sustain Well-Being. In all their classes, students will be generating evidence of their progress in these 7 areas.

Language Arts will offer opportunities to develop the following 3 aspects of the 7 skills:

- TSA 1A ACQUIRE: Analyze text
- TSA 4A COMMUNICATE: Organized and Purposeful Communication
- TSA 4B COMMUNICATE: Evidence and Supporting Detail in Communication
- TSA 4D COMMUNICATE: Written style and Mechanics
- TSA 5D SELF-DIRECT: Persist and Revise

Rubrics

For assessments, students will receive detailed instructions for how to get started and succeed. They will also receive a rubric that shows which standards and transferable skills are being assessed, and how they will be assessed. Below is an example of what a rubric might look like.

GATEWAY STANDARD: (4) COMMUNICATE COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY:	STARTING	PROGRESSING	MEETING	EXCEEDING
Organized and Purposeful Communication	Communicates a clear focus	Communicates a clear focus with organized ideas or steps that maintain that focus	Communicates a clear focus with logical, organized ideas or steps that maintain that focus and lead to a conclusion	Communicates a clear focus with a logical, organized ideas or steps that maintain that focus and lead to a conclusion Demonstrates the importance or relevance of the focus

Homework

Twice a week students may have a literary circle assignment to complete outside of class. This will be a section of reading from the classroom book and a short written assignment. Other homework might be finishing up classwork, reading, or something else meaningful. Some homework will be tracked for completion, but will not ultimately factor into a student's final proficiency-based assessment.

When I do assign homework, my goal is that it will:

- Extend learning and allow for meaningful use of class time
- Be limited to 20 minutes per night
- Help students develop time management and organization skills
- Encourage a love of reading and an independent relationship with learning

For more on Proficiency, Habits of Work, Late Work, Class Participation, and the Blackbaud reporting tool, please refer to the [Middle School Welcome Letter](#).

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have questions or concerns. I'm looking forward to working with you and your students.

Best,
Hailey Neal