

Dear Parents:

Your child is engaged in a special language arts curriculum for high-ability learners. It is organized around the concept of culture and designed specifically to meet the needs of high-ability students. The goals of the curriculum are:

- To develop analytical and interpretive skills in literature.
- To develop writing skills.
- To develop listening/oral communication skills.
- To develop reasoning skills.
- To understand the concept of culture.

In these language arts units, we will study the concept of culture through many different types of activities. We will consider the many ways that literature can demonstrate a culture. We will also read a wide variety of literature which will provide the context for looking at culture and perhaps reveal uses of language in surprising places. Discussion, public speaking and writing provide opportunities to personally create insights into the use of both historically and contemporaneously.

In class, we will read and discuss short pieces of literature – poems, short stories, speeches and essays. Everyone will keep a response journal to clarify thinking and to help prepare for written and oral assignments. As we read literature, we will respond to it and think about it by analyzing ideas, vocabulary and structure. Specifically, we will look for insight into the concept of culture. We see this as especially beneficial to connect with 7<sup>th</sup> grade history.

We will continue to use the Daybook to reinforce skills in reading, writing and interpreting literature. The Junior Great Books Program will continue to encourage independent thought and well reasoned discussions of literature. We will be using an advanced collection in this series to continue challenging our students in these areas. Finally, the 6+1 Traits of Writing will form a basis for writing instruction and improvement.

In vocabulary, we will use The Word Within the Word, Vol. 1 which is a study of Latin and Greek roots that form a foundation for our vocabulary. This is a cumulative study which will mean ongoing review throughout the year. This book will challenge and develop each student's

vocabulary. Our goal is to make a major and lasting impact on your child's vocabulary development that will continue into high school and throughout their lives.

Students will be assessed in several ways. First, pre-assessment will measure skills in language arts areas of literature, writing and linguistic competency. Secondly, a portfolio will document progress in writing. Post-assessments will be given to assess exit skills in language arts areas covered. Finally, we welcome feedback from you as parents.

Good curriculum and instructional practice should involve parents, as well as students. The following ideas may be useful as your child experiences this curriculum:

- Read the same book your child is reading and discuss key ideas.
- Research family history and heritage with your child.
- Play games as a family such as Scrabble or Boggle or any of the variety of word games to enhance vocabulary and language usage.
- Encourage your child to write every day in a diary or journal.
- Try to set-up a letter-writing arrangement with someone from another country or another part of the United States in order to encourage writing on a regular basis, either through regular or electronic mail.
- When viewing film or television together, discuss the ideas presented with your child and encourage close attention to how persuasion is handled in the media and how various cultural and ethnic groups are portrayed.

Thank you, in advance, for your interest in your child's curriculum. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information as the year progresses.

Sincerely,

Teachers of Above Level Language Arts