

English Department Philosophy

The English discipline offers students a lens through which to more deeply understand themselves and the world around them and to communicate those understandings to others.

What we do

Our mission is to help students develop skill and confidence in three areas:

- 1) **Critical thinking.** Students learn to react thoughtfully to texts. They inquire, research, analyze, and propose and defend arguments about abstract ideas as well as moral and ethical issues emerging from texts of all kinds.
- 2) **Communication.** Students learn to communicate meaningfully in written and spoken discourse. Effective communication skills include mastery of narrative and argumentative structure, sentence construction, tone, and grammar, as well as sharing and responding to ideas and perspectives during class discussions.
- 3) **Awareness.** Students develop their awareness of the individual and others on a local and global scale, finding connections and building empathy with those unlike themselves.

How we do it

Through our courses at every level, we provide students access to the following:

- 1) **Texts** that are relevant, meaningful, and broadening. They emphasize the richness of language in its capacity to communicate and to spark joy in reading.
- 2) **Writing opportunities** that are varied and authentic. They emphasize students' ownership of ideas and structure and encourage positive academic risk-taking.
- 3) Opportunities for **discussion and collaboration** with peers, both formal and informal, that emphasize a balance of listening to, sharing, and exchanging ideas.

Core Concepts & Skills

Concepts and skills covered in this course align with the Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening Standards of the [Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Framework](#).

Course-End Learning Objectives

Students will demonstrate analytical writing skills.

Students will demonstrate comprehension and analysis of a text.

Students will demonstrate writing skills for personal/creative writing.

Students will demonstrate oral communication skills in a variety of formats.

Students will correctly apply taught grammar and usage conventions in writing.

Students will understand the literary, thematic, historical, and/or cultural context of each text and its connection to their lives.

Essential Questions

Why do authors choose to write their stories, and what can we learn from reading them?

How do authors craft their texts? What style choices do they make and why?

How does telling a story shape one's identity?

How has the past shaped our current identity?

What are the causes and consequences of defiance?

What is our obligation to others?

Is America a place, a group of people, or an idea?

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Representative Core Texts

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

When the Emperor was Divine by Julie Otsuka

Catcher in the Rye by JD Salinger

Into the Wild or another memoir or work of narrative nonfiction

Selected works of Emerson and Thoreau

There There by Tommy Orange

Selected Supreme Court cases

Sing, Unburied, Sing by Jesmyn Ward