



The Herald

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Core Knowledge Language Arts

This year, for kindergarten through fifth, MCA transitioned to the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) program developed by the Core Knowledge Foundation. MCA has a long-standing relationship with the this foundation, housed at the University of Virginia and founded by Dr. E. D. Hirsch. Our new CKLA program integrates two instructional strands for K-3 that work together to instill both background knowledge and foundational skills, and these integrate into a single strand in grades 4-5.

The listening and learning strand builds students' knowledge and vocabulary while they are still learning to read, which is crucial for long-term success. At the heart of this strand are authentic fiction and nonfiction texts that teachers read aloud. These texts are grouped in knowledge domains that create interactive opportunities to question, discuss, and share ideas centered on text. This strand ensures students are well prepared when they transition from learning to read to reading to learn.



Olivia Brindle forms words while sounding out letters and letter blends in Mrs. Stanley's kindergarten class using the skills strand.



The skills strand teaches reading and writing in tandem. These lessons support reading and foundational skills through daily instruction in phonemic awareness, spelling patterns, decoding with engaging decodable texts, writing mechanics and writing structure and processes.

How does our new approach effect what we are used to seeing? Due to its comprehensive nature, CKLA replaces some of the distinct, instructional models that MCA has used, such as Four Blocks, Orton-Gillingham, and 6+1 Traits of Writing. However, CKLA retains many of the same approaches. For example, CKLA uses multi-sensory methods for sound-letter decoding and encoding as does Orton-Gillingham. CKLA uses "making words" as does Four Blocks. Our teachers are able to incorporate the 6+1 Traits of Writing into the new approach. Rather than replacing these models, adoption of this new approach allows for their foundational concepts to be more efficiently and seamlessly integrated across all K-5 classes.

With every transition comes challenges, but our teachers' collective ability will effectively implement the program and meet the needs of our students. For additional information, two good places to start are Amplify, which distributes the materials, and the CKLA website. We are excited about the opportunities provided by CKLA and are looking forward to the benefits that will accrue to our students in reading, language comprehension, and writing.

To visit the CKLA website, simply use this address in your browser: www.coreknowledge.org/curriculum/language-arts/. To learn more about Amplify, visit www.amplify.com.

Students in Mrs. Allred's second grade class really enjoy the listening and learning strand as they actively discuss ancient Greek civilization.

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